

Questions and Answers

(overcoming difficulties)

Question 1: How should we prepare ourselves mentally and physically before participating a meditation retreat?

Answer 1: You must meditate regularly at home, for example, an hour each in the morning and before going to bed, so as to get used to sitting meditation both mentally and physically. If you have some worldly things to do, you should do them either before or after the meditation retreat. If you keep on thinking about them during the retreat, you will not be able to meditate wholeheartedly, and you cannot develop deep concentration. So you must put them aside during the retreat. You should appreciate and make full use of the precious opportunity to accumulate strong and powerful meditation pāramī.

Question 2: If a person is always busy with his work, business, family affairs, marriage life, can he succeed in meditation when he participates a meditation retreat?

What did the Lord Buddha say about the effect of marriage on the practice of meditation? Can a married person meditate well? If it is possible, how does he or she do that?

After going back to daily work from a meditation retreat, the pace of life is fast, not as slow and peaceful as that during a meditation retreat. How do we maintain a peaceful and serene mind at work?

After attaining the first jhāna, or even up to the fourth jhāna with the five masteries, if a meditator lives heedlessly and indulges in various sensual pleasures, such as eating, drinking, playing, watching movies, singing, dancing, or if he is very busy at work, or if he is ill and weak, but meditates every day, will his concentration drop? Why?

Answer 2: During the Buddha's time, in Sāvatti there were seventy million people. Fifty million of them were noble lay disciples of the

Buddha. The number of noble lay disciples in Rājagaha was also about fifty million. Every day they prepared food in the morning and offered it to the Saṅgha. After lunch, female disciples went to the monastery to listen to the Dhamma and meditated there. They went home before sunset. In the evening, male disciples went to the monastery to listen to the Dhamma and meditated there. They went home in the early morning the next day. In this way they practised the Dhamma as far as possible. So there were many noble disciples during the Buddha's time.

If you want to be a faithful disciple of the Buddha, you should emulate their example, because only the noble disciple has unshakeable faith in the Buddha. You should not try to be modern lay disciples of the Buddha. Do you know what are modern lay disciples? They are the Buddha's disciples for only a few hours a week, especially when they give offering to monks and listen to Dhamma talk on Sunday. But for most of the time they are the faithful disciples of television, music, movies, newspaper, shopping, empty talk, etc. Please tell me what kind of faithful disciple you want to be?

It is not possible for you to indulge in sensual pleasures and to maintain deep concentration at the same time, because sensual desire is one of the five hindrances to concentration. If you really want to succeed in or maintain your meditation, you must give up sensual pleasures. Do not make your defilement as an excuse of not having time to practise. It is actually harmful to you, because your bad kamma will not accept such an excuse and may drag you to the woeful state next life.

If you want to succeed in meditation, you should spend a long time for meditation. To meditate for a few weeks is very short, so you should not expect much from it. I understand that you laypeople are very busy and have many problems in life. Since so many of you have so many problems in your lay life, let me give you a suggestion: how about becoming a monk or a nun?

Question 3: If a layperson also can realise Nibbāna, why the Buddha formed the bhikkhu and bhikkhuni Saṅghas?

Answer 3: A layperson's life is very busy with many responsibilities.

He has to work and to take care of his wife, children, etc. Under such condition it is not easy for him to keep the five precepts pure, not to mention to develop deep concentration and sharp insight knowledge and to realise Nibbāna. The laypeople during the Buddha's time had enough pāramīs, so they could realise Nibbāna. But nowadays it is not easy for laypeople to realise Nibbāna. This is why the Buddha formed the bhikkhu and bhikkhuni Saṅghas so that those who want to practise the Dhamma wholeheartedly can do so by going forth from household life to the homeless life.

Another purpose of forming the bhikkhu and bhikkhuni Saṅghas is to preserve the threefold Buddha's teaching: scriptures, practice and realisation. It is not easy to study the Buddhist scriptures thoroughly. Among laypeople there are only a few who can study the scriptures partially. But there are many bhikkhus who can study them thoroughly. As long as the scriptures are still extant, the later generation can practise according to them to develop concentration, and insight knowledge and to realise Nibbāna.

Question 4: I feel that many meditators are very proud. Does practising meditation make a meditator become conceited? How do we overcome the pride of thinking that we can meditate better than others?

Answer 4: Concentration and insight knowledge can suppress pride only temporarily; only the Arahant Path Knowledge can destroy pride completely. So if a meditator has not yet attained Arahantship, he still has pride. If you really want to overcome pride, you should meditate hard to attain Arahantship.

Question 5: The Sayadaw mentioned in his dhamma talk: meditation itself has only benefit, but no harm; the only problem is the pride and attachment that arise after meditation. How does a meditator detect whether pride and attachment have arisen in his mind? And how to prevent them from arising?

Answer 5: If he can discern ultimate mentality, it will be very easy for him to check whether pride and attachment have arisen in his

mind. If he cannot discern ultimate mentality, it is still not difficult for him to check them, because they are very obvious. For example, if a meditator who has attained jhānas looks down upon those who have no jhāna, pride has arisen in him. Whenever he has a thought to compare himself to any other person, such as 'He is better than I', 'I am better than he', or 'We are of equal status', pride has arisen in him.

In the Pāḷi Texts there is a story about pride: Once the Venerable Anuruddha asked the Venerable Sāriputta: 'I can clearly see a thousand world systems with a single divine eye consciousness, but why I cannot attain deliverance?' The Venerable Sāriputta answered: 'That is pride when you said "I can clearly see a thousand world systems with a single divine eye consciousness", and that is restlessness when you said "why I cannot attain deliverance?."' Having heard the Venerable Sāriputta's answer, the Venerable Anuruddha understood that pride and restlessness are the hindrances which hinder his path to deliverance.

To remove pride and attachment, a meditator who is practising Vipassanā meditation should repeatedly comprehend all formations, mentality-materiality, as impermanent, suffering and non-self. With the insight knowledge of the three characteristics, he will gradually remove the perceptions of permanence, happiness and self towards all formations, hence weaken his pride and attachment. When he attains the Arahant Path through practising, the path will destroy all defilements completely, so that they will not be able to arise in the future.

As for those who have not yet practised Vipassanā meditation, they may temporarily suppress pride and attachment through wise reflection. They should reflect thus: 'Pride and attachment are harmful to me, and may cause me to be reborn in the four woeful states. Thus I should accept neither pride nor attachment, so as not to harm myself', or 'In the ultimate sense, in the world there is nothing to be proud of nor to be attached to, when then should I be proud and attached?' and so on. Through wise reflection, we can see the dangers of pride and attachment, and thus give them up.

Question 6: How does one not give up meditation after many failures

caused by very many internal and external obstacles?

Answer 6: You should have strong faith in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha. You should believe that what the Buddha says about the round of rebirths is true. Even if you have done many wholesome deeds in this life, if you still have not realised Nibbāna, you will have to go on in the round of rebirths, experiencing the sufferings of birth, ageing, sickness, death, etc. And if any of your unwholesome kamma ripens at the near-death moment in any life, you will be reborn in one of the four woeful states, even in hell, experiencing very severe suffering. In the *Bālapaṇḍita Sutta*, the Discourse of Fools and Wise Men, the Buddha says to bhikkhus thus:

‘A fool who has given himself over to misconduct of body, speech, and mind, on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappears in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, even in hell.

‘Were it rightly speaking to be said of anything: “That is utterly unwished for, utterly disagreeable,” it is of hell that, rightly speaking, this should be said, so much so that it is hard to find a simile for the suffering in hell.’

When this was said, a bhikkhu asked the Blessed One: ‘But, Venerable Sir, can a simile be given?’

‘It can be, bhikkhu,’ the Blessed One said. ‘Bhikkhus, suppose men caught a robber and presented him to the king, saying: “Sire, here is a robber. Order what punishment you will for him.” Then the king said: “Go and strike this man in the morning with a hundred spears.” And they struck him in the morning with a hundred spears. Then at noon the king asked: “How is that man?” — “Sire, he is still alive.” Then the king said: “Go and strike this man at noon with a hundred spears.” And they struck him at noon with a hundred spears. Then in the evening the king asked: “How is that man?” — “Sire, he is still alive.” Then the king said: “Go and strike this man in the evening with a hundred spears.” And they struck him in the evening with a hundred spears. What do you think, bhikkhus? Would that man experience pain and grief because of being struck with the three hundred spears?’

‘Venerable Sir, that man would experience pain and grief because

of being struck with even one spear, let alone three hundred.’

Then, taking a small stone the size of his hand, the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus thus: ‘What do you think, bhikkhus? Which is the greater, this small stone that I have taken, the size of my hand, or Himalaya, the king of mountains?’

‘Venerable Sir, the small stone that the Blessed One has taken, the size of his hand, does not count beside Himalaya, the king of mountains; it is not even a fraction, there is no comparison.’

‘So too, bhikkhus, the pain and grief that the man would experience because of being struck with the three hundred spears does not count beside the suffering of hell; it is not even a fraction, there is no comparison.

Now the wardens of hell torture him with the fivefold transfixing. They drive a red-hot iron stake through one hand, they drive a red-hot iron stake through another hand, they drive a red-hot iron stake through one foot, they drive a red-hot iron stake through another foot, they drive a red-hot iron stake through his belly. There he feels painful, racking, piercing feelings. Yet he does not die so long as that evil action has not exhausted its result.

Next the wardens of hell throw him down and pare him with axes. There he feels painful, racking, piercing feelings. Yet he does not die so long as that evil action has not exhausted its result.

Next the wardens of hell set him with his feet up and his head down and pare him with adzes. There he feels painful, racking, piercing feelings. Yet he does not die so long as that evil action has not exhausted its result.

Next the wardens of hell harness him to a chariot and drive him back and forth across burning ground, blazing, and glowing. There he feels painful, racking, piercing feelings. Yet he does not die so long as that evil action has not exhausted its result.

Next the wardens of hell make him climb up and down a great mound of burning coals, blazing, and glowing. There he feels painful, racking, piercing feelings. Yet he does not die so long as that evil action has not exhausted its result.

Next the wardens of hell take him feet up and head down and plunge him into a red-hot metal cauldron, burning, blazing, and glowing. He is cooked there in a swirl of froth. And as he is being

cooked there in a swirl of froth, he is swept now up, now down, and now across. There he feels painful, racking, piercing feelings. Yet he does not die so long as that evil action has not exhausted its result.

Next the wardens of hell throw him into the Great Hell. Now as to that Great Hell, bhikkhus:

It has four corners and is built
With four doors, one set in each side,
Walled up with iron and all around
And shut in with an iron roof.
Its floor as well is made of iron
And heated till it glows with fire.
The range is a full hundred leagues
Which it covers all-pervasively.

Bhikkhus, I could tell you in many ways about hell. So much so that it is hard to find a simile for the suffering in hell.'

Here, I want to ask you: How do you feel if you light a lighter and use the fire to burn one of your fingers for a minute? Is it very painful? And now you should consider: How would you feel if your whole body were burned or boiled in hell for a long time? The Buddha does not mean to frighten us with what he says in the sutta, but just to show the facts, so that to arouse strong wholesome desire in us to practise to avoid falling into such a pathetic state.

If we have faith in the Buddha, we will have strong wholesome desire in us to practise, so as to escape from the suffering of the round of rebirths. This wholesome desire is the desire-basis for success, which is one of the four bases for success. Why it is called the basis for success? Because it helps us overcome various obstacles, and arouse the utmost energy to practise continuously until we achieve our aim. This kind of energy is another basis for success, namely, energy-basis for success. Apart from these two bases, we should also cultivate the other two bases for success, namely, mind-basis and investigation-basis for success. The mind-basis for success is the extreme fondness of mind towards and application of mind into the Dhamma. Investigation-basis for success is wisdom, such as the wisdom arising from reflecting on the suffering of hell. If

you want to develop the ability to continue practising the Dhamma even though you have met many failures, you should have unshakeable faith in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha, and cultivate the four bases for success.

In the Bālappaṇḍita Sutta the Buddha gives a simile to show how long the fool has to suffer in the woeful states. There he says:

'Suppose a man threw into the sea a yoke with one hole in it, and the east wind carried it to the west, and the west wind carried it to the east, and the north wind carried it to the south, and the south wind carried it to the north. Suppose there were a blind turtle that came up to the surface once at the end of each century. What do you think, bhikkhus? Would that blind turtle put his neck into that yoke with one hole in it?'

'He might, Venerable Sir, sometime or other at the end of a long period.'

'Bhikkhus, the blind turtle would take less time to put his neck into that yoke with a single hole in it than a fool, once gone to perdition, would take to regain the human state, I say. Why is that? Because there is no practising of the Dhamma there, no practising of what is righteous, no doing of what is wholesome, no performance of merit. There, mutual devouring and the slaughter of the weak prevails.'

From the blind turtle simile given by the Buddha, we know clearly that once a person has fallen into a woeful state, the time he has to pass in order to regain the human state is very hard to imagine. Here, let me ask you a question: Is it worthwhile to lead a heedless life, enjoy sensual pleasures for sixty or seventy years, without practising the Dhamma, and then experience the hellish suffering for thousands and millions of years? Let me tell you a story to show you how foolish it is to do that.

During the Kassapa Buddha's time, there were four friends. They were sons of rich merchants. One day, they discussed what should they do in their life. One of them said: 'With a Buddha so great and so good journeying from place to place, shall we give alms, perform works of merit, and keep the moral precepts?' But none of them agreed to the proposal. One said: 'Let us spend our time drinking strong drink and eating savory meat. This would be a profitable way

for us to spend our lives.’ Finally one said: ‘Friends, there is only one thing for us to do. There is no woman who will refuse to live with the man who gives her money. Let us offer money to other men’s wives and commit adultery with them.’ ‘Good, good!’ cried all of them, agreeing to his proposal.

From then onwards they sent money to beautiful women, one after another, and for twenty thousand years committed adultery. When they died, they were reborn in the Avīci Hell, where they suffered torment during the interval between two Buddhas. Dying again, because the fruit of their evil deeds was not yet exhausted, they were reborn in the Iron Caldron Hell, sixty leagues in measure. After sinking for thirty thousand years, they reached the bottom, and after rising for thirty thousand years, they came again to the brim. Each one of them desired to pronounce a single stanza, but all they could do was to utter a single syllable apiece, ‘du’, ‘sa’, ‘na’ and ‘so’. Then they flopped over and sank back again into the Iron Caldron.

At that time, King Pasenadi was trying to kill a man so as to marry his beautiful wife. Because of that he was unable to sleep at night, and happened to hear the four terrible sounds. He was afraid that he would meet some danger. Under his chief queen Mallikā’s advice, he went to see the Buddha to ask what do those sounds mean.

The Buddha explained to him the deeds done by the four foolish men and the results they got thereof. Then the Buddha recited the four stanzas left uncompleted by the four evildoers as follows:

An evil life we led, we who gave not what we had.
With all the wealth we had, we made no refuge for ourselves.

Sixty thousand years in all have we completed;
We are boiling in hell. When will the end come?

There is no end. From where comes an end?
No end appears; for both you and I committed sin.

Be sure that when I go hence and am reborn as a human being,
I shall be bountiful, keep the precepts and do much good.

The four foolish men met the Kassapa Buddha’s Dispensation, but they did not appreciate it. They repented only when they were reborn in hell, but then it was too late. Nowadays there are many people who have gained the human state which is hard to gain, and have met the Buddha’s Dispensation which is hard to meet, but most of them do not appreciate the Buddha’s teachings, and still indulge in sensual pleasures. Do you want to follow those foolish people?

If you do not want to lose the Buddha’s Dispensation which is hard to meet, and do not want to experience the suffering of hell, you should develop strong faith. You should believe that if you practise the three trainings of morality, concentration and wisdom according to the Buddha’s teachings, you can attain the stream-entry path and fruition, whereby you will never fall into the four woeful states again. And if you attain Arahantship, you will never be reborn again. Based on this strong faith, you should arouse strong and powerful wholesome desire and energy, and practise with perseverance until you attain Arahantship.

May you attain Arahantship as early as possible.

Question 7: Is habit a kind of kamma?

Answer 7: Good habit is wholesome kamma, and bad habit is unwholesome kamma, but an Arahant’s habit is only functional, neither wholesome nor unwholesome kamma.

Question 8: Good habit is wholesome kamma, and bad habit is unwholesome kamma. Then, the tiger, which always catches and eats small and weak animals, must be doing unwholesome kammās continually, will always reap the bad results, and has very little chance to be reborn in the happy existence, isn’t it?

Answer 8: Yes. That is why in the Bālapaṇḍita Sutta the Buddha says that there is no practising of the Dhamma in the woeful states, no practising of what is righteous, no doing of what is wholesome, no performance of merit. There, mutual devouring and the slaughter of the weak prevail.

The commentary to the Dhammapada says that hell is the real

home of a fool. After suffering in the great hell for a long time, a fool will be reborn in a minor hell. After suffering for a long time there, he will be reborn in another minor hell. After suffering thus for a long time in various hells, he will be reborn in the peta world. Again he has to suffer for a long time there, and then he may be reborn as an animal. In the animal world, mutual devouring and the slaughter of the weak prevail, and he performs a lot of unwholesome kammās. After death he is again reborn in hell. After going in such a cycle for many times, he may be reborn as a human being. But due to his bad habit, again he performs a lot of unwholesome kammās, and after death he is reborn in hell. Thus we call a fool as a permanent inhabitant of hell.

Only after a long time in hell they take a short vocation in the human world. And after the short vocation, he will go back to hell. That is why the Buddha says that it is difficult to be born as a human being. However many people do not really appreciate being born as a human being. They live heedlessly, enjoying various sensual pleasures as they like. They cohabit with their lover, seduce others' wife or husband, abort their own foetus for a higher standard of living, order many chicken and pigs to be killed for their wedding, earn money unlawfully, and do many other unwholesome deeds. They regret that they did not make a proper use of human life only when they are reborn in the woeful states, but then it is too late.

Question 9: Must a meditator try to be serene and serious throughout his life? The Buddha does show his humorous in some suttas, doesn't he?

Answer 9: The Buddha was serious, but gentle and compassionate. The Buddha never joked. He just told the truth.

Once the Buddha told bhikkhus a Jātaka story as follows:

Once upon a time, there was a merchant named Kappaṭa. He had a donkey which used to carry loads of pottery for him, and every day he used to go a journey of seven leagues. On a certain occasion Kappaṭa loaded his donkey with potteries and took him to Takkasīla. While he was engaged in disposing of his wares, he allowed the donkey to run loose. As the donkey wandered along the bank of a

ditch, he saw a she-donkey and straightaway went up to her. She gave him a friendly greeting and said to him, 'Where have you come from?' 'From Benares.' 'On what errand?' 'On business.' 'How big a load do you carry?' 'A big load of pottery.' 'How many leagues do you travel, carrying a big load like that?' 'Seven league.' 'In the various places you visit, is there anyone to rub your feet and your back?' 'No.' 'If that is the case, you must have a mighty hard time.'

As the result of her talk, the donkey became dissatisfied. After the merchant had disposed of his wares, he returned to the donkey and said to him, 'Come, Jack, let's be off.' 'Go yourself; I won't go.' Over and over again the merchant tried with gentle words to persuade him to go; and when, in spite of his efforts, the donkey remained balky, he abused him. Finally he thought to himself, 'I know a way to make him go,' and pronounced the following stanza:

I will make a goad for you, with a sixteen-inch thorn;
I will cut your body to shreds; know this, donkey.

When the donkey heard that, he said, 'In that case I shall know just what to do to you.' So saying, he pronounced the following stanza:

You say you will make a goad for me, with a sixteen-inch thorn. Very well!
In that case I will plant my fore feet, let fly with my hind feet,
And knock out your teeth; know that, Kappaṭa.

When the merchant heard that, he thought to himself, 'What can be the reason for his talking thus?' The merchant looked this way and that, and finally he saw the she-donkey. 'Ah!' thought the merchant to himself, 'She must have taught him these tricks. I will say to the donkey, 'I will bring you home a mate like that.' Thus, by employing the lure of the opposite sex, I will make him go.' Accordingly he pronounced the following stanza:

A she-donkey with face like mother-of-pearl,
Possessed of all the marks of beauty,
Will I bring to you to be your mate; know that, donkey.

When the donkey heard that, his heart rejoiced, and he replied with the following stanza:

So a she-donkey with face like mother-of-pearl,
 Possessed of all the marks of beauty,
 Will you bring to me to be my mate; in that case, Kappaṭa,
 Whereas hitherto I have travelled seven leagues a day,
 Hereafter, I will travel fourteen leagues.

‘Well then,’ said Kappaṭa, ‘come!’ And taking the donkey with him, he went back to the place where he had left the cart.

After a few days the donkey said to him, ‘Didn’t you say to me, “I will bring you a mate”?’ The merchant replied, ‘Yes, I said just that, and I will not break my word; I will bring you home a mate. But I will provide food only for you. It may or may not be enough for both you and your mate, but that is a matter for you alone to decide. After you both have lived together, foals will be born to you. The food I shall give you may or may not be enough for both you and your mate and your foals too, but that is a matter for you alone to decide.’ As the merchant spoke these words, the donkey lost his desire.

At the end of the story, the Buddha said that the merchant was he himself, the male donkey was Nanda, and the she-donkey was Janapadakalyāṇī, Nanda’s ex-fiancée.

You may say that the Buddha told a humorous story. But he did not joke, he just told the truth.

Question 10: In the Buddha’s Jātaka stories, there were many cases wherein people could communicate with animals, such as the story told by the Sayadaw last night, wherein the trader could talk to his donkey. Is it true that people in the olden days had the ability to communicate with animals like that? If it is true, what method did they use? Was it through the mind or was it actual talking? Why the people nowadays do not have such ability?

Answer 10: In some Jātaka stories, it is stated clearly some animals could speak human language, because they were human beings in

their recent past lives. In some other Jātaka stories, the Buddha put the animals’ thoughts into words, because he knew what they were thinking.

Question 11: I feel frightened on and off without any reasons. Is it my unwholesome result? It disturbs my daily life as well as my meditation. I tried to ignore it but to no avail. What shall I do to overcome it?

Answer 11: We cannot say for sure that it is your unwholesome result, but it may so, but may be due to your unwise attention as well. To overcome it, you should replace unwise attention with wise attention.

Question 12: How does a meditator who has not yet attained any jhāna or insight knowledge get rid of unwholesome thoughts and wrong view?

Answer 12: He should mindfully concentrate on his meditation object, such as the breath and the four elements. Apart from this, he can also do wise reflection, such as reflecting on the sufferings of birth, ageing, sickness, death, woeful states, round of rebirths, etc. He can also ponder on the Buddha’s teachings. While doing so, the unarisen unwholesome thoughts and wrong view will have no chance to arise, and the arisen unwholesome thoughts and wrong view will disappear.

Question 13: How should we counsel a beginner meditator who is pessimistic since childhood, lacks of self-confidence and thinks that he can never succeed in anything?

Answer 13: It is not easy to help such a person. You may try to teach Dhamma to him to arouse his faith in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha. But usually he does not listen to the Dhamma with faith. It would be good if he continues to meditate, because when he does make progress in meditation he will gain faith in the Dhamma as well as self-confidence.

(morality)

Question 14: Initially I wanted to renounce the world to practise the three trainings, morality, concentration and wisdom, especially the Pa-Auk method. But I saw some who kept their precepts strictly liked to involve in slandering and criticism. This makes me feel sad and scared. Why a person who keeps precepts strictly cannot be more understanding and compassionate towards others?

Answer 14: You should not worry and get affected by other's defilements. You should remember that even the Buddha did get criticised and falsely accused by others. When someone slanders or criticises you or others, it is his own unwholesome kamma. You should not show the same towards him.

Question 15: If a person who claims that he keeps precepts strictly like slandering and criticising others' faults, and has a mind full of hatred and jealousy, is his behaviour in accordance with the Buddha's teaching? Will he face any difficulty if he meditates?

Answer 15: His behaviour is not in accordance with the Buddha's teaching. It is difficult for him to meditate.

In time of old, an elder and a young bhikkhu wandered for alms in a certain village. At the first house they got only a spoonful of hot porridge. The elder's stomach was paining him with wind. He thought 'This porridge is good for me; I shall drink it before it gets cold'. People brought a wooden stool to the doorstep, and he sat down and drank it. The young bhikkhu was disgusted and said 'The old man has let his hunger get the better of him and has done what he should be ashamed to do'. The elder wandered for alms, and on return to the monastery he asked the young bhikkhu 'Have you any footing in this Dispensation, friend?' – 'Yes, Venerable Sir, I am a stream-enterer.' – 'Then, friend, do not try for the higher paths; one whose cankers are destroyed has been reviled by you.' The young bhikkhu asked for the elder's forgiveness and was thereby freed from the obstacle to attain the higher attainments caused by his criticism.

If a person has criticised a noble person and does not apologise, he cannot attain any path and fruition, and if a noble person with a lower attainment has criticised a noble person with a higher attainment and

does not apologise, he cannot attain any higher path and fruition in that life. From here we can see that it is not good at all to criticise anybody, because you do not know if he is a noble person.

Question 16: The Sayadaw said that the result of offending a noble person is very bad. Why there is a difference between the results of offending a noble person and offending a worldly person?

Answer 16: Because a noble person's morality, concentration and wisdom are superior, whereas a worldly person has only inferior or even no morality, concentration and wisdom.

Question 17: After offending a noble person, if the offender has no chance or courage to ask the noble person for forgiveness, but just feels sorry or ask for forgiveness in front of a Buddha statue, will his offence still be an obstacle for his practice?

Answer 17: Yes, it is still an obstacle. If the noble person is still alive, he must ask for his forgiveness personally. If the noble person is dead, he must ask for forgiveness in front of his tomb or remains.

Question 18: Can a monk or a nun who takes money attain the stream-entry path and fruition?

Answer 18: According to Theravāda teaching, if a bhikkhu is a real bhikkhu and takes money, he cannot attain the stream-entry path and fruition. Some bhikkhus who take money say that they have attained the stream-entry path and fruition. If they are real bhikkhus it is impossible. Regarding this I want to explain about some Theravāda monastic codes. For a person to become a real bhikkhu, he must fulfil five factors.

The first is a valid case (vatthusampatti), which means the applicant must be free from faults. He must not have killed his father, his mother, an Arahant, wounded the Buddha with evil intention, caused schism in the Saṅgha, committed sexual intercourse with a bhikkhuni or sāmaṇeri, must not have fixed wrong view and he must be at least twenty years old.

The second factor is a valid chapter of bhikkhus (parisasampatti): When he is ordained there must be at least five real bhikkhus if outside India, and at least ten real bhikkhus if inside India, including his preceptor, to perform the formal act. If one, two or three of those bhikkhus have committed a pārājika, or if when one or some of those bhikkhus were ordained not in accordance with the vinaya rules, then the formal act is invalid.

The third factor is a valid boundary (sīmāsampatti): The boundary (sīmā) must be valid. If the boundary is invalid, for example, the uposatha hall in it is connected with any building outside the boundary with wires, water pipes etc, then the formal act is also invalid. And the distance between the bhikkhus who participate in the formal act must be within an extended arm-length (hatthapasa).

The fourth factor is a valid motion (ñāttisampatti): One of the bhikkhus must recite the motion to inform the rest that the applicant is asking for upasampada with whom as his preceptor. Then it must be followed by three announcements. If the motion and announcements are recited in the wrong order or not recited in full, then the formal act is invalid.

The fifth factor is a valid formal act (kammavācasampatti): The formal act (kammavāca) must be recited in correct grammar. If the grammar used is wrong, then the formal act is invalid and the applicant cannot become a real bhikkhu.

When the five factors just mentioned are fulfilled, then the formal act is valid and the applicant becomes a real bhikkhu. If a real bhikkhu takes money and practises samatha and vipassanā meditation, he cannot attain the stream-entry path and fruition. If a bhikkhu who takes money really attains the stream-entry path and fruition, then he is certainly not a real bhikkhu.

Nowadays in Theravāda tradition there is no more bhikkhuni and sāmaṇerī, so we cannot discuss about them. Now we have only 'silashins'; we may call them nuns. Many Mahātheras say that they should observe ten precepts because they wear robes, so they also should not accept money. But if they want to accept money they may do it according to their desire.

Question 19: The Sayadaw said that there was a tree deva who killed

many bhikkhus because they defecated under his tree. It is an unwholesome kamma for a deva to kill bhikkhus? Will he be reborn in hell?

Answer 19: Yes, it is unwholesome kamma, and if the kamma ripens at his near-death moment, he may be reborn in hell.

In the Sutta Vibhaṅga of Vinayapiṭaka, it is stated that once bhikkhus of Āḷavī cut down trees to repair their dwellings. Then a certain bhikkhu of Āḷavī went to a tree, intending to cut it down, and the female deva living in that tree said to him: 'Do not, Venerable Sir, desiring to make an abode for yourself, cut down my abode.'

The bhikkhu, taking no notice, cut it down, and in doing so, struck the arm of that female deva's son. Then the female deva thought: 'What now if I should kill this bhikkhu here? But this would not be suiting in me. What now if I tell this matter to the Buddha?' Then she approached the Buddha and told him this matter.

The Buddha said: 'Very good, female deva, it is good that you did not kill the bhikkhu. If you had killed the bhikkhu today, you would also have produced much unwholesome kamma. In a certain place there is a solitary tree; you go and stay there.'

Later people looked down upon and criticised the cutting down of trees by those bhikkhus of Āḷavī, so the Buddha laid down a rule for bhikkhus and bhikkhunīs, that is: For destruction of plant there is an offence of expiation (pācittiya).

Question 20: What is the proper time for us to keep one-day eight precepts? Some people keep it from 7 p.m. to 7 p.m. the next evening, and take dinner just before and after keep the eight precepts, and thus look like keeping only seven precepts. What kinds of food are allowable and not allowable to eat at the wrong time? Are cereals drinks, milk, horlick, milo, soybean milk, sweet potatoes soup, coffee, and 3 in 1 coffee allowable? What are the high bed and large bed?

Answer 20: There is no such a thing as seven precepts; you can observe either five or eight precepts. The proper time to keep one-day eight precepts is from morning until daybreak the next day. To keep it from 7 p.m. to 7 p.m. the next evening is cheap. Although a worker

of Anathapindika did keep the eight precepts for only half a day beginning from evening, but he did not eat any food after midday, and eventually died from hunger.

There are three types of medicine allowed to be taken at the wrong time: one-day juice, seven-day medicine and lifelong medicine. One-day juice includes most types of fruit juice, but it must be properly filtered. Certain types of juice are not allowable, such as the juice of coconut, watermelon and honeydew melon. There are only five types of seven-day medicine, namely, ghee, fresh butter, oil, honey and sugar. Lifelong medicine includes roots, barks, leaves, etc which are not used as food by people. Cereals drinks, milk, horlick, milo, soybean milk, sweet potatoes soup, cocoa powder, plain chocolate, cheese and 3 in 1 coffee are not allowable. Black coffee is, according to Sri Lanka and Thai traditions, allowable.

A high bed is a bed with legs longer than eight fingers of the Buddha's finger from the frame below. According to the commentary, the allowable height is twenty-seven inches or less, but according to some tradition it is about thirteen inches or less. A large bed is not a bed big in measurement, but a bed stuffed with cotton wool, or stuffed with fur thicker than four finger-breadths, or covered with woolen bed spread with decorative drawings, etc.

Question 21: If a person who, having undertaken the five or eight precepts, broke one of them, how should he confess the offence? Can he re-undertake the precepts? Can he be ordained as a bhikkhu? If he practises meditation can he attain any jhāna, path or fruition?

Answer 21: It is not necessary to confess, he just needs to re-undertake the precepts. He can be ordained as a sāmaṇera or a bhikkhu, and can attain Arahantship, like Aṅgulimāla who had killed many people, and was later ordained as a bhikkhu and attained Arahantship.

Question 22: If a bhikkhu broke a pārājika offence and became a layman, can he undertake the five or eight precepts? If he practises meditation can he attain any jhāna, path or fruition?

Answer 22: Yes, he can undertake the five or eight precepts, and if he meditates he can attain the jhāna, path or fruition.

Question 23: Can a bhikkhu who committed a pārājika offence become a sāmaṇera?

Answer 23: If he immediately confesses his pārājika offence, he can be re-ordained as a sāmaṇera. But if he has concealed it for some time and participated in uposatha etc, then he cannot be re-ordained as a sāmaṇera.

Question 24: If a bhikkhu or bhikkhuni, having committed a sanghadisesa offence, confessed it to another bhikkhu or bhikkhuni, but has not yet undergoing parivāsa or mānatta. Can such a person attain any jhāna, path or fruition?

Answer 24: No. But if he has started to undergo parivāsa or mānatta, then he can attain the jhāna, path or fruition.

Question 25: If a bhikkhu or bhikkhuni, having committed a sanghadisesa offence, confessed it to another bhikkhu or bhikkhuni, but disrobed without undergoing mānatta. Can such a person undertake the five or eight precepts? If he or she practises meditation can he or she attain any jhāna, path or fruition?

Answer 25: Yes, he or she can undertake the five or eight precepts, and can attain the jhāna, path or fruition. But if he or she is re-ordained, the sanghadisesa offence committed before is still valid and he or she must undergo mānatta or both parivāsa and mānatta.

Question 26: Can a person who did one of the five anantarika kammās undertake the five or eight precepts?

Answer 26: Yes. For example, King Ajātasattu, who committed parricide, later became a pious Buddhist, observing the five precepts.

Question 27: Sometimes I remember my past evil deeds and thus

cannot concentrate on my meditation. I do not know what shall I do. Sometimes I think I am an incurable evil worldling, and it is impossible for me to succeed in meditation. Is it still possible for me to practise samatha and vipassanā meditation? Can I still attain any path or fruition? How to remove my doubt and worry?

Answer 27: If you have not done any of the five weighty kammās, you still can succeed in meditation in this life.

There is a story about the hunter Milaka in the commentary to Saṃyutta Nikāya. One day when he was hunting in the forest, he felt thirsty and went to a forest monastery to drink water. When he came up to some water pots placed under a tree, he saw that they were empty. At that time a Mahāthera was sweeping the monastery compound. The hunter went up to him and said: ‘Bhikkhu, you eat the food offered by people, but you are very lazy. You do not put water into water pots.’ The Mahāthera was surprised to hear that because he had filled those water pots with water before sweeping. So he went up to those water pots and saw that they were full of water. At that moment, he immediately remembered the story of the Venerable Losakatissa, a disciple of the Venerable Sāriputta.

In the Kassapa Buddha’s time, Losakatissa angrily threw away offered by a devotee to an Arahant. Because of this unwholesome kamma, he was reborn in hell. After emerging from hell, he was reborn in the womb of a fisherman’s wife in a fishermen village. As soon as he was conceived in the womb, all the fishermen in the whole village were unable to catch any fish. When he was seven years old, his mother drove him away. When the Venerable Sāriputta saw this poor boy, he ordained him as a sāmaṇera. Because the Venerable Losakatissa had enough pāramīs, he became an Arahant before long. But he never had enough food to eat. While going for alms, as soon as devotees put alms into his bowl, the food disappeared.

One day the Venerable Sāriputta knew that the Venerable Losakatissa was going to attain Parinibbāna on that day. He wanted to let him have enough food to eat before attaining Parinibbāna. So after getting enough food during his almsround, he sent the food back to him. As soon as the food entered the Venerable Losakatissa’s bowl it disappeared. So the Venerable Sāriputta went for alms again and

received some four-sweet medicine. When he came back to the monastery again, he held his bowl with his hand lest the food would disappear again, and let the Venerable Losakatissa ate from his bowl. That was the only meal the Venerable Losakatissa was able to satisfy himself in his whole life. Not long after the meal he passed away into Parinibbāna.

Seeing the pots full of water, the Mahāthera remembered the story of the Venerable Losakatissa. He held the water pots and let Milaka drank water from them. Seeing this the hunter Milaka got a sense of spiritual urgency. So he got ordained as a sāmaṇera under the Mahāthera. While meditating, he saw the animals he killed and the weapons he used before, and was unable to meditate properly. So he informed his preceptor that he wanted to disrobe.

The Mahāthera asked him to collect some Udumbara wood, a kind of wood containing much water, made a heap of it on a marble slab and burn it. The sāmaṇera followed his order but tried as he might he was unable to burn the wood. Then the Mahāthera took with his psychic power a little fire from hell and showed it to the sāmaṇera. Then he put the fire on the heap of wood and it became ash immediately. He said to the sāmaṇera: ‘If you disrobe the fire hell will be your destination. If you do not want to be reborn there, you should practise samatha and vipassanā meditation diligently. Frightened by the hellish fire, the sāmaṇera did not want to disrobe anymore. He made a straw rope and tied it to his head. Then he immersed his legs into a pot of water up to his knees, and meditated diligently. Sometime he would practise walking meditation for the whole night. In this way he practised samatha and vipassanā meditation diligently and became a non-returner.

Thus, if you practise diligently you can also attain the jhāna, path and fruition.

Question 28: Is the highest path a layperson can attain the non-returning path? What are the necessary conditions for him to attain Arahantship? Should one who has gone forth bow down to a layperson Arahant?

Answer 28: A layperson also can attain Arahantship. For example, the

Buddha's father, King Suddhodana became an Arahant as a layman. However, a layperson Arahant must get ordained on the day he attains Arahantship, otherwise he will enter Parinibbāna on that very day. One has gone forth should not bow down to a layperson Arahant.

Question 29: Should a worldly bhikkhu bow down to an Arahant sāmaṇera?

Answer 29: No. An Arahant sāmaṇera should bow down to a worldly bhikkhu because a bhikkhu possesses higher morality (adhisīla).

(concentration)

Question 30: For a beginner in ānāpānasati, are suitable environments, place, location and postures very important? Will these external conditions affect the quietude and composure of his mind?

Answer 30: Yes, suitable environments and postures are important for a meditator to develop concentration. Unsuitable external conditions do affect the quietude and composure of his mind. To develop concentration in a noisy environment is more difficult than in a quiet one. As for postures, generally speaking, sitting posture is the best of all postures for meditation.

Question 31: What kind of environment and place is more suitable for a beginner to practise meditation?

Answer 31: The Buddha points out that a forest, the foot of a tree or an empty place is a suitable place for practicing meditation. Although you are now neither in a forest nor at the foot of a tree and the place here is crowded with many meditators, if you are able to ignore the presence of others, put aside all other things and just be aware of your meditation object, this place will be just like an empty place to you. Furthermore, group meditation does help you arouse energy and progress faster in meditation.

Question 32: Why a meditator can concentrate his mind more easily

at a pure and quiet place, but not so well in a noisy environment? Is it due to his insufficient concentration? How does he tranquilize his mind while staying at a noisy place?

Answer 32: At a pure and quiet place, a meditator is able to concentrate on his meditation object most of the time, and pays attention to other objects just occasionally. That is why he can concentrate his mind more easily there. In a noisy environment, most of the time his mind is distracted by various objects, such as the various noises, and pays attention to his meditation object just occasionally. That is why he cannot concentrate well there. He is unable to concentrate well because his concentration is weak. For those who have sufficient concentration, such as the Buddha and most of his Noble disciples, noises cannot disturb them. They are able to enter absorption concentration at any place. To tranquilize your mind while staying at a noisy place, all you have to do is to ignore the noises and focus your mind only on your meditation object. Don't feel disappointed when you are disturbed by noises. 'Practice makes perfect.' If you practise in the way just mentioned again and again perseveringly, gradually you will make progress and eventually be able to calm down your mind even in the noisiest environment.

The well-known Venerable Webu Sayadaw says that you must go to a place where you have no hearing, a completely silent place. How do you go to such a place? It is very difficult to find a completely silent place. Even a forest is full of various sounds, those of beasts, birds, insects and wind. The way to go to a completely silent place is to concentrate entirely on your meditation object. When you enter absorption concentration, you will not hear any sound. Thus we say that you have gone to a place where you have no hearing. According to the Abhidhamma, two consciousnesses cannot occur simultaneously in a single moment. Therefore when your mind concentrate on your meditation object uninterruptedly, you will not know any other objects, let alone sounds.

Question 33: I am just a beginner ānāpāna meditator. Although there are the books composed by the Sayadaw, some of my friends think that they cannot understand the meditation method thoroughly by

reading on their own, and insist that I should give them instructions. What shall I do then?

Answer 33: It is better for them to learn from a teacher.

Question 34: The Sayadaw emphasises that meditators should begin with either mindfulness of breathing or four-elements meditation. Did the Buddha also teach people of different temperaments in the same way?

Answer 34: To prescribe the best meditation subject according to individual meditator's temperament is the domain of the Buddha, because only the Buddha has the knowledge of knowing all beings' latent tendency (*āsāyānusaya-nāṇa*). Since I have no such knowledge to do so, I teach meditators to begin with common meditation subjects. If you think that some other meditation subject taught by the Buddha suits you best, you may practise it. No problem.

Question 35: If a meditator does not get *nimitta* or any other fruitful results after having practised meditation for three or five years, or longer, what should he do?

Answer 35: The meditator should first check to see that does he practise systematically according to the right way, under the guidance of a competent teacher, and that does he practise diligently daily with great interest. If he does, then he should choose another meditation subject from the forty meditation subjects mentioned in the *Visuddhimagga* and practise it diligently for one month. If he still fails to make any progress, then he should try another meditation subject diligently for another month. If that also fails, then he should try another meditation subject.... He should try in this way until he finds a suitable meditation subject. Then he should practise it until he succeeds.

Question 36: Will sitting meditation make one stupid?

Answer 36: No. We may see it clearly from our Gotama Buddha's

example. In the night when he would get enlightened, he practised sitting meditation diligently under the Bodhi tree. If sitting meditation did make one stupid, how had he got enlightened?

Question 37: How do I know that I am progressing in my practice of *ānāpānasati*? How do I know that I am heading towards the right direction?

Answer 37: If you can concentrate thoroughly on your breath, you are progressing in mindfulness of breathing. When the *parikamma*, *uggaha* and *paṭibhāga nimittas* appear one after another and you can concentrate thoroughly on them, you are progressing further in mindfulness of breathing. When you attain the first, second, third and fourth *jhānas* one after another, you are progressing further in mindfulness of breathing. When you are able to discern the four elements of your breath to see *kalāpas* and analyse their ultimate materiality, you are progressing further in mindfulness of breathing. When you are able to discern the mentality that produces your breath, you are progressing further in mindfulness of breathing. While progressing in this way, you are heading towards the right direction.

Question 38: While practising mindfulness of breathing, although I never see the white *nimitta* like cloud, my face is covered by non-transparent light, which is like sunlight and lasts for one to two hours. I have been experiencing this for more than a month, but I do not see the *paṭibhāga nimitta*. Why I do not make any progress? Is that the method I use is wrong?

Answer 38: Because your five controlling faculties are weak.

Question 39: What should we do to be able to concentrate continuously on the breath around the nostrils for a long time?

Answer 39: You should meditate continuously in all four postures so as to develop continuous mindfulness and concentration.

Question 40: Should a beginner ignore the light arising through

meditation when it appears? If he ignores it, will it disappear and never reappear? After following the teacher's instruction to ignore the light, my mind becomes restless and cannot concentrate peacefully, my ears start to pay attention to some useless sounds, my faith is shaken and I feel like giving up the practice. Is this the hindrance caused by my past bad kamma or the Māra?

Answer 40: It is not because of your past bad kamma or Māra. When the light first appears, usually it is not stable because your concentration is still not stable. It appears when your concentration is strong, and disappears when your concentration drops. You lose it because your concentration is weak. And now you cannot regain it because you are disappointed. While practising mindfulness of breathing, you should not expect anything, but just concentrate on your breath. If your concentration is strong and stable, the light will always be there.

Question 41: After attaining the ānāpāna jhāna, can the meditator see some events in his past life, for example, where was he born and who was he?

Answer 41: No, that belongs to the field of psychic power of recollecting past life.

With the assistance of ānāpāna jhāna, you can practise four-elements meditation easily, and then proceed to practise the discernment of materiality and the discernment of mentality. After that you can discern the mentality-materiality in your past life to see the five past causes, ignorance, craving, clinging, volitional formations and kamma, which gave rise to your present life. So, with the assistance of the ānāpāna jhāna, you can develop insight knowledge to see past mentality-materiality, but not the concepts of what was your name, the name of the place you were born, etc.

Question 42: Can we use the ānāpāna nimitta as a kasiṇa object to practise the light kasiṇa or white kasiṇa?

Answer 42: No. This is not mentioned in the Pāli Text and

commentaries.

Question 43: While practising mindfulness of breathing, can we note the lifting, pushing forward and stepping of our footstep during walking meditation?

Answer 43: It is advisable to concentrate on only your breath. It is also all right for you to discern the four elements in your body systematically while walking. But it is not so good to practise any non-orthodox ways.

Question 44: The Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta mentions four stages of mindfulness of breathing, but in some other suttas and commentaries, sixteen stages are mentioned. What is the difference between these two?

Answer 44: There is no difference between them. In the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta, the Buddha taught four stages of mindfulness of breathing only for samatha practice, for the attainment of jhāna. In some other suttas, such as the Ānāpānasati Sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya, the Buddha taught sixteen stages. These sixteen stages are divided into four tetrads: The first tetrad is contemplation of the body (kāyānupassanā), the second tetrad is contemplation of feeling (vedanānupassanā) the third tetrad is contemplation of mind (cittānupassanā) and the fourth tetrad is contemplation of dhamma-objects (dhammānupassanā).

The first tetrad consists of four stages: the long breath, the short breath, the whole breath body, and the subtle breath. If you practise it systematically, you will see the nimitta, the sign. If you concentrate on it well, gradually it will become the ānāpāna paṭibhāga-nimitta, the counterpart sign of breath. If you concentrate on it systematically, you will attain the first jhāna up to the fourth jhāna. After attaining the fourth jhāna, how should you continue to practise? According to the Ānāpānasati Sutta, you must practise the second tetrad, changing to practise vipassanā. According to the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta, as we have explained, you have to discern three types of body: (1) the body of in-and-out breath (assāssa-passāssa-kāya), (2) the produced body

(karāja-kāya), and (3) the body of mentality (nāma-kāya). The body of in-and-out breath is the ultimate materiality in the breath; the produced body is the four types of materiality, i.e. materiality produced by kamma, mind, temperature and nutritive essence, in other words, twenty-eight types of materiality. These two bodies are also called the body of materiality (rūpa-kāya). The body of mentality is ultimate mentality consisting of the four mental aggregates, aggregates of feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness. Jhāna dhammas are also included in these four mental aggregates. Then you should discern the causal arising and passing away and momentary arising and passing away. Then you must practise vipassanā to attain higher and higher insight knowledges. Then you will realise Nibbāna with your path knowledge and fruition knowledge.

The second tetrad: (1) ‘He trains thus: “experiencing joy I will breathe in; experiencing joy I will breathe out.”’ In this case, there are two ways of explanation – by way of samatha and vipassanā. How do you experience joy? You should enter the first jhāna, which has five jhāna factors, including joy (pīti). Therefore, when you are staying in the first ānāpāna jhāna, you are experiencing joy while breathing in and out. After emerging from the first jhāna and discerning five jhāna factors, you should enter the second jhāna. In the second jhāna, there are three jhāna factors, including joy. So when you are staying in the second jhāna, you are also experiencing joy while breathing in and out. This is the explanation by way of samatha.

Then when you change to practise vipassanā, you should enter the first jhāna. Emerging from it, you should discern the first jhāna dhammas. There are thirty-four mental formations in the first jhāna, including joy. You should systematically contemplate them as impermanent, suffering and non-self. When you are contemplating in this way, there is joy in your insight knowledge. Just like when you see your dear friend smiling at you, you will also smile at him. So too, while taking the first jhāna dhammas with joy as object, there also will be joy in your insight knowledge. At that time, you are experiencing joy while breathing in and out. After that you should enter the second jhāna. Emerging from it, you should contemplate the

second jhāna dhammas, which consist of thirty-two mental formations, including joy, as impermanent, suffering and non-self. In your insight knowledge there is also joy. At that time, also, you are experiencing joy while breathing in and out. This is the explanation by way of vipassanā.

(2) ‘He trains thus, “experiencing pleasure I will breathe in; experiencing pleasure I will breathe out.”’ We can explain this also in both ways, by ways of samatha and vipassanā. Pleasure exists in the first, second and third jhānas. When you are staying in any of them, you are experiencing pleasure while breathing in and out. This is the explanation by way of samatha. If you change to practise vipassanā, emerging from any of the first, second and third jhānas, you should contemplate its jhāna dhammas, including pleasure, as impermanent, suffering and non-self. There is also pleasure in your insight knowledge then. Therefore, we say that you are experiencing pleasure while breathing in and out. This is the explanation by way of vipassanā.

(3) ‘He trains thus, “experiencing mental formations I will breathe in; experiencing mental formations I will breathe out.”’ In this case, we also can explain by way of samatha and vipassanā. When you are staying in any of the four jhāna attainments, you are experiencing mental formations, especially jhāna factors, while breathing in and out. This is the explanation by way of samatha. If you change to practise vipassanā, emerging from any of the four attainments, you should contemplate its jhāna dhammas as impermanent, suffering and non-self. At that time, you will experience thirty-four mental formations of the first jhāna, thirty-two of the second jhāna, thirty-one of the third jhāna and thirty-one of the fourth jhāna. At that time, you are experiencing mental formations while breathing in and out.

Why did the Buddha teach mental formations (citta-saṅkhāra) in this stage? What are mental formations? It is mentioned in one Sutta thus: ‘saññā ca vedanā ca cittasaṅkhāro.’ – ‘perception and feeling are mental formations.’ When you are discerning mental formations, you should emphasise perception and feeling, especially feeling. Because of this, this tetrad is called contemplation of feeling (vedanānupassanā).

(4) ‘He trains thus, “tranquilizing the mental formations I will breathe in; tranquilizing the mental formations I will breathe out.”’ In this case also we should explain by ways of samatha and vipassanā. If you enter the first, second, third, and fourth jhāna attainments taking the ānāpāna paṭibhāga-nimitta as object, at that time you are tranquilizing the mental formations. Why? The first jhāna is quieter than access concentration; the second jhāna is quieter than the first jhāna; the third jhāna is quieter than the second jhāna; the fourth jhāna is quieter than the third jhāna. In this way, the higher jhāna is quieter than the lower one. Because of this, we say that you are tranquilizing mental formations while breathing in and out.

If you change to practise vipassanā, you must contemplate the jhāna dhammas of the first, second, third and fourth jhānas as impermanent, suffering and non-self systematically and separately. When you are contemplating the first jhāna dhammas as impermanent, suffering and non-self, your insight knowledge is quiet. When you are contemplating the second jhāna dhammas in the same way, your insight knowledge is quieter. When you are contemplating the third jhāna dhammas in the same way, your insight knowledge is even quieter. When you are contemplating the fourth jhāna dhammas in the same way, your insight knowledge is still even quieter. That is why we say that you are tranquilizing mental formations while breathing in and out.

In this stage also you must emphasise feeling. That is why this stage is also called contemplation of feeling (vedanānupassanā).

So in this tetrad, jhāna dhammas of all the four jhāna attainments are mentioned. In the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta the Buddha also teaches, ‘Thus he abides contemplating the body as a body internally, etc.’ Among the three types of body, these four jhānas are included in the mentality body (group), nāma-kāya. So the second tetrad is the same as what is explained in the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta.

The third tetrad: (1) ‘He trains thus, “experiencing the mind I will breathe in; experiencing the mind I will breathe out.”’ You should understand two types of experiencing the mind, by way of samatha and vipassanā. You should enter the first, second, third and fourth ānāpāna jhānas step by step. After emerging from each jhāna, you should contemplate with emphasis on consciousness. Then we say

that you experience the mind while you are breathing in and out. This is the explanation by way of samatha.

If you change to practise vipassanā, you should enter the first jhāna, taking ānāpāna paṭibhāga-nimitta as object. After emerging from it, you should contemplate its thirty-four mental formations, with emphasis on consciousness, as impermanent, suffering and non-self. You should contemplate in the same way the second, third and fourth jhānas. Then we can say that you experience the mind while breathing in and out. This is the explanation by way of vipassanā.

(2) ‘He trains thus, “gladdening the mind I will breathe in; gladdening the mind I will breathe out.”’ In this case, we may explain by ways of samatha and vipassanā. You should enter the first jhāna, taking the ānāpāna paṭibhāga-nimitta as object. After emerging from it you should reflect on its five jhāna factors, including joy. Because of that joy, your mind is glad. Therefore, when you are staying in the first jhāna, you gladden your mind while breathing in and out. The similar condition occurs in the second jhāna. This is the explanation by way of samatha.

If you change to practise vipassanā, you should contemplate the jhāna dhammas of the first and second jhānas, including joy, as impermanent, suffering and non-self. When you are contemplating in this way, joy is present in your insight knowledge because there is joy in its object. At that time, you gladden your mind while breathing in and out. This is the condition of vipassanā.

(3) ‘He trains thus, “concentrating the mind I will breathe in; concentrating the mind I will breathe out.”’ You should enter all the four jhānas taking the ānāpāna paṭibhāga-nimitta as object. In each jhāna there is one-pointedness (ekaggatā), also called concentration (samādhi). So when you are staying in any jhānas, you are concentrating the mind while breathing in and out. This is the explanation by way of samatha.

If you change to practise vipassanā, you should contemplate jhāna dhammas of these jhānas as impermanent, suffering and non-self. When you are contemplating in this way, your mind is concentrating on their three natures. At that time, you are concentrating the mind while breathing in and out. This is the explanation by way of

vipassanā.

(4) ‘He trains thus, “liberating the mind I will breathe in; liberating the mind I will breathe out.”’ When you are staying in the first jhāna, taking the ānāpāna paṭibhāga-nimitta as object, you are liberating your mind from the five hindrances while breathing in and out. Then you should enter the second jhāna, taking the ānāpāna paṭibhāga-nimitta as object. At that time you are liberating your mind from applied thought (vitakka) and sustained thought (vicāra) while breathing in and out. Then you should enter the third jhāna, taking the ānāpāna paṭibhāga-nimitta as object. At that time, you are liberating your mind from joy (pīti) while breathing in and out. Then you should enter the fourth jhāna, taking the ānāpāna paṭibhāga-nimitta as object. At that time, you are liberating your mind from bliss (sukha) while breathing in and out. This is the explanation by way of samatha.

If you change to practise vipassanā, you should enter the first jhāna, taking the ānāpāna paṭibhāga-nimitta as object. After emerging from it, you should contemplate the first jhāna dhammas as impermanent, suffering and non-self. When you see clearly these three natures of the first jhāna dhammas with your insight knowledge, your mind is liberated from the perception of permanence, happiness and self. You should contemplate the remaining three jhānas in the same way. When you see the natures of impermanence, suffering and non-self clearly with your insight knowledge, you are liberating your mind from the perception of permanence, happiness and self while breathing in and out. This is the explanation by way of vipassanā.

So this tetrad emphasizes the mind. That is why it is called cittānupassanā. However, you should not discern only mind, but should contemplate also its associated mental formations.

In the ānāpāna section of the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta, when you are discerning the five aggregates, or the bodies of in-and-out breath, materiality and mentality, these jhāna dhammas also are included. So the practices introduced in these two Suttas are basically the same.

The fourth tetrad: ‘He trains thus, “contemplating impermanence I will breathe in; contemplating impermanence I will breathe out.”’ In this section, the Buddha taught only vipassanā. Here you should distinguish four cases: (1) impermanence (anicca), (2) the nature of

impermanence (aniccatā), (3) contemplation of impermanence (aniccānupassanā), and (4) aniccānupassī.

What is impermanence? ‘Aniccanti pañcakhandhā.’ – ‘Impermanence is the five aggregates.’ The five aggregates are impermanent because they are fading away as destruction. What is the nature of impermanence? It is the impermanent nature of the five aggregates. What is contemplation of impermanence? It is the insight knowledge that sees the impermanent nature of the five aggregates. What is aniccānupassī? It means the meditator who sees the impermanent nature of the five aggregates. You must first discern the five aggregates, and then contemplate their impermanent nature.

In the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta, The Buddha teaches the higher practice after the attainment of the fourth jhāna thus: ‘Thus he abides contemplating the body as a body internally. Or he abides contemplating the body as a body externally. Or he abides contemplating the body as a body both internally and externally.’ This means that you must discern both the internal and external five aggregates. In this tetrad of the Ānāpānasati Sutta, the Buddha also teaches to discern the five aggregates. Therefore, the methods taught in these two suttas are the same.

(2) ‘He trains thus, “contemplating fading away I will breathe in; contemplating fading away I will breathe out.”’ There are two types of fading away, virāga: khayavirāga and accantavirāga. Khayavirāga means fading away as destruction of the five aggregates. Accantavirāga means absolute fading away, Nibbāna. First you must contemplate the five aggregates as impermanent, suffering and non-self systematically. Then you must emphasise their passing away, fading away. When your insight knowledge becomes mature, you will realise Nibbāna, which is the absolute fading away of the five aggregates, because there are no five aggregates in Nibbāna. Here you should distinguish between the insight knowledge, the path knowledge and the fruition knowledge. If you contemplate only the passing away of the five aggregates as impermanent, suffering and non-self, you are contemplating fading away of the five aggregates while breathing in and out. When you realise Nibbāna and enter the fruition attainment, you are contemplating the absolute fading away of the five aggregates while breathing in and out.

(3) ‘He trains thus, ‘contemplating cessation I will breathe in; contemplating cessation I will breathe out.’” There are two types of cessation, *nirodha*: *khaṇanirodha* and *accantanirodha*. *Khaṇanirodha* means the momentary cessation of the five aggregates. *Accantanirodha* means the complete cessation of the five aggregates, *Nibbāna*. After contemplating the five aggregates as impermanent, suffering and non-self systematically, you will see only their momentary cessation. This insight knowledge will temporarily remove defilements, and you are then contemplating momentary cessation of the five aggregates while breathing in and out. After realising *Nibbāna*, you should enter the fruition absorption, taking *Nibbāna* as object. In *Nibbāna* there are no five aggregates. So when you are staying in the fruition absorption, you are contemplating the complete cessation of the five aggregates while breathing in and out.

(4) ‘He trains thus, “contemplating relinquishment I will breathe in; contemplating relinquishment I will breathe out.’ There are two types of relinquishment, *paṭinissagga*: *vassagga-paṭinissagga* and *pakkhandana-paṭinissagga*. *Vassagga-paṭinissagga* means relinquishment as giving up. *Pakkhandana-paṭinissagga* means relinquishment as entering. You must contemplate the five aggregates as impermanent, suffering and non-self systematically up to the knowledge of dissolution, *bhaṅga-ñāṇa*. When your insight knowledge is mature, your *aniccānupassanā* will relinquish conceit, your *dukkhānupassā* will relinquish attachment, and your *anattānupassanā* will relinquish wrong view. When your insight knowledges relinquish various kinds of defilement, you are contemplating relinquishment of defilements while breathing in and out. Your insight knowledge does not only relinquish the defilements arising dependent on the five aggregates but also inclines your mind towards *Nibbāna*, the complete cessation of the five aggregates and all defilements. So your insight knowledge is also called *vassagga-paṭinissagga*. Some day you may realise *Nibbāna*. At that time your path knowledges will destroy defilements stage by stage. At last your defilements will cease completely. At that time you are contemplating relinquishment of defilements while breathing in and out. Further, your path knowledge will directly enter *Nibbāna*. Then we can say that you are contemplating relinquishment as entering

Nibbāna.

Altogether there are four tetrads. In each stage of each tetrad, there are in-breath and out-breath. So there are sixteen types of in-breath and sixteen types of out-breath. Altogether there are thirty-two types of breath. This is the Buddha’s instruction showing how you should breathe in and out to realise *Nibbāna*. Now we are breathing in and out at every moment every day. You should ask yourself whether you are breathing according to the Buddha’s instruction. If so, some day you will attain Arahantship, and all defilements will completely cease. After *Parinibbāna*, all the five aggregates and suffering will completely cease. So please breathe according to the Buddha’s instruction.

In conclusion, there is no difference between the method taught in the *ānāpāna* section of the *Mahāsatiṭṭhāna Sutta* and that in the four *ānāpāna* tetrads of the *Ānāpānasati Sutta*. The Buddha taught in different ways according to listeners’ temperament. The meanings of these two methods are the same.

Question 45: The *Visuddhimagga* does not explain that it is necessary to visualize a Buddha image to practise Recollection of the Buddha, why the Sayadaw always instructs meditators to first visualize a Buddha image?

Answer 45: In the *Dhajagga Sutta* the Buddha says: ‘Mameva tasmim samaye anussareyyātha: Itipi so bhagavā araham sammāsambuddho vijjācarana sampanno sugato lokavidū anuttaro purisadammasārathī sathā devamanussānaṃ buddho bhagavā’ti.’ – ‘At time of danger, just remember me, and reflect thus: “Such indeed is He the Exalted One: The worthy one, the supremely enlightened one, endowed with knowledge and conduct, the well-gone, the knower of the worlds, the incomparable charioteer of men to be tamed, the teacher of gods and men, the enlightened one, the exalted one.”’ Therefore, at the beginning stage of practising Recollection of the Buddha, we should first visualize a Buddha image, otherwise how can we know whose qualities are we recollecting upon? The people in the Buddha’s time could visualize the image of the Buddha, but the Buddha attained *Parinibbāna* long ago, so now we can only visualize a Buddha image

and take it to represent the Buddha. Anyway, we visualize a Buddha image only at the beginning stage of the practice, later we should concentrate only on the qualities of the Buddha, and it is not a problem if the Buddha image disappears then.

Question 46: Could the Sayadaw please explain in detail how does a beginner who has not reached access and absorption concentration practise recollection of the Buddha and recollection of death?

Answer 46: I shall explain them in brief only; for a detailed explanation you should read *The Visuddhimagga*. A beginner practises recollection of the Buddha by imagination only. First he should look at a Buddha image and take it as the real Buddha. Then he should imagine the Buddha image in his mind. Afterwards he should choose one of the Buddha's qualities, for example, Arahant. There are five definitions of Arahant. He may choose any of them. If he chooses, for example, the definition of worthy of being paid respect by all human beings, devas and brahmas because of his incomparable morality, concentration and wisdom, then he should just concentrate on this quality until he reaches access concentration. But the Buddha's qualities are very deep, and it is not easy for a beginner meditator to succeed in this meditation.

A beginner practises recollection of death also by imagination only. First he should try to see his own future corpse, and then take the cessation of his life faculty, which ceases together with death consciousness, as object, and concentrate on it with the thought 'my death is certain' to develop deep concentration. But it is not easy for a beginner meditator to succeed in this meditation also.

An easier way to practise recollection of the Buddha and recollection of death is to first attain the fourth jhāna with mindfulness of breathing or access concentration with four-elements meditation, and then practise them with the assistance of light of wisdom produced by the fourth jhāna or access concentration.

Question 47: Can a person realise Nibbāna by practising recollection of the Buddha alone?

Answer 47: No. But based on the access concentration acquired through practising recollection of the Buddha, he can practise four-elements meditation to see kalāpas, analyse ultimate materiality, ultimate mentality and then discerns the causes of mentality-materiality. After that he should discern mentality-materiality and their causes as impermanent, suffering and non-self. Practising vipassanā in this way he may realise Nibbāna.

Question 48: Do we need deep concentration to be able to practise the fourfold protective meditation?

Answer 48: It is better, but it is not a must.

Question 49: How should a beginner meditator who has no jhāna practise loving-kindness meditation?

Answer 49: He should first imagine the smiling face of a person he respects and of his same sex. Then he should extend loving-kindness towards that person in the four ways as follows: 'May this good person be free from enmity; may he be free from mental suffering; may he be free from physical suffering; may he takes care of himself happily.' After extending in this way for four to five times, he should choose the way he likes the most and extend his loving-kindness towards that person in that was continuously, with his mind placed on the smiling face of that person. He must practise for a few weeks, months or even years until he attains jhāna. After that he should practise as what I said in my previous Dhamma talk. However, it is not easy for him to succeed in attaining loving-kindness jhāna, because the image of the person he chooses is usually not stable, and will disappear from time to time.

Question 50: Some people say that if a person who has not yet attained the fourth equanimity jhāna practises loving-kindness meditation, lust will arise in him. Is it true?

Answer 50: No, if he practises loving-kindness meditation correctly, lust will not arise. Furthermore it is not possible for him to attain the

fourth equanimity jhāna before attaining loving-kindness jhāna, because to attain the fourth equanimity jhāna, he must first attain the third jhānas of loving-kindness, compassion and appreciative joy.

Question 51: Will practising loving-kindness meditation makes a person incline towards practising the bodhisatta path?

Answer 51: It depends on the meditator's desire. If he wants to practise the bodhisatta path he may do so, or if he wants to become a noble disciple he may become one as well, just like the Venerable Subhuti, Uttarā, Queen Sāmavatī and Khujjuttarā who were expert in loving-kindness meditation.

Answer 52: If he maintains his loving thought he will have access concentration of loving-kindness. But if he pays unwise attention to any object he will lose his loving-kindness.

Question 52: When we face drowsiness or restlessness in meditation, we may need to use different methods to overcome it at different times. How do we develop the skill to use the effective method at any time?

Question 53: Some meditators told me that while they are meditating some beings came to ask for sharing merit with them. Is this just an illusion? Is it effective to share our merit to them by practising loving-kindness meditation? If it is effective, does it mean that they were related to us in our past life?

Answer 53: It might be their illusion or they really saw them. To extend your loving-kindness to them is not sharing your merit with them. If you want to share merit with them, you should perform some wholesome kamma, such as giving, keeping precepts, practising meditation, and then say: 'I share this merit with you' or 'I share this merit of mine with all beings equally'. In the round of rebirths there is no being who has never been our relative.

Question 54: When a meditator practices loving-kindness meditation,

he can see devas, beings in hells, etc. What is the difference between this ability and the divine eye psychic power?

Answer 54: Divine eye psychic power is more powerful than loving-kindness meditation. Although both of them produce brilliant light, the light of divine eye psychic power is more powerful than that of loving-kindness jhana. Therefore, a loving-kindness meditator sees devas, beings in hells, etc. only partially, but a meditator possessed of divine eye psychic power sees them clearly, and knows clearly which kamma produced their rebirth there.

Question 55: To attain Nibbāna, is it necessary for a meditator to practise every type of meditation included in kāyagatāsati kammaṭṭhāna, for example, ānāpānasati first, then the four-element meditation, then the thirty-two parts of the body, etc.? If it is, how does he practise the cemetery contemplations nowadays? Is this sequence prescribed by the Buddha?

Answer 55: To attain Nibbāna, it is not necessary to practise all types of meditation included in kāyagatāsati kammaṭṭhāna. The Buddha prescribes this series of meditation for the sake of explaining his teachings (desana), not as a fixed sequence of practical meditation. When you practise cemetery contemplation, it is also not necessary to practise all the nine types. You may contemplate any type of corpse you saw before as repulsive to develop concentration. If you have never seen any corpse, you may contemplate the carcass of any animal or even on the picture of a corpse on newspaper or a magazine.

Question 56: What are the similarity and difference between the white kasiṇa and the light kasiṇa? What is the highest jhāna that they can lead to?

Answer 56: They take different objects. The white kasiṇa takes the white as object, whereas the light kasiṇa takes sunlight, moonlight, candlelight, and any other light as object. However, when you attain the fourth jhāna of them, they are almost similar, because the object

of the white kasiṇa becomes whitish transparent light. The highest jhāna that they can lead to is the fourth jhāna.

Question 57: When a beginner practises meditation on the thirty-two parts of the body without the assistance of light of wisdom, does it mean that he discerns them by imagination or by concept? Please explain in detail. Thank you.

Answer 57: Yes, he does it only by imagination. Whether the thirty-two parts of the body are seen directly or by imagination, they are just concepts. If you want to know the detailed method for a beginner, you should read *The Visuddhimagga*.

Question 58: Are concentration and right mindfulness developed only in slow movements, not in fast movements?

Answer 58: It depends on the individual meditator. Some meditators can concentrate and are mindful only when they move slowly, but some meditators can concentrate and are able to be mindful even though they move normally or quickly.

Question 59: Can one attain access concentration or jhāna by reciting mantras with the beads?

Answer 59: In Theravāda Buddhism there is no mantra samatha meditation. A Burmese Mahāthera told me that mantras came from Hinduism, Christian and Muslim. In Theravāda Buddhism there is no meditation using beads. So we cannot say that one can attain access concentration or jhāna by reciting mantras with the beads.

Question 60: Is the wandering thought arising during meditation a kind of kamma? If it is, then it means that while meditating we not only performs wholesome kamma but may also perform unwholesome kamma, doesn't it?

Answer 60: It depends on what kind of thought it is. If you think with wise attention, for example, you think of doing offering to the Saṅgha

tomorrow, it is wholesome. But if you think with unwise attention, for example, you think of enjoying sensual pleasures, it is unwholesome.

Question 61: Are strong five hindrances that make us unable to attain jhāna the obstacle of kamma or Māra?

Answer 61: The obstacle of kamma refers to unwholesome kamma. The five hindrances are just unwholesome kammās that arise in your mind, not Māra.

Question 62: After a meditator has achieved all the eight attainments, is it possible for him to be reborn in the asaṅṅāsatta plane in his next life?

Answer 62: It depends on his desire. If he wants to be reborn in the asaṅṅāsatta plane, he must practise 'nāmaṅga bhāvanā', the cultivation of repulsiveness towards mentality. This is a special type of cultivation. First he must enter the fourth jhāna. After emerging from it, he cultivates repulsiveness towards mentality by reciting 'dhī nāma, dhī nāma', meaning 'mentality is repulsive, mentality is repulsive.' Why? He thinks that because of mentality he experiences suffering and happiness; without mentality he will not experience any suffering or happiness, just as a corpse will not feel painful or happy whatever others may do to it. That is why he practises nāmaṅga bhāvanā. Only after you have succeeded in such cultivation, you have the chance to be reborn in the asaṅṅāsatta plane.

Within the Buddha's dispensation, you can choose to be reborn in any plane according to your desire and jhāna attainments. However, people outside the Buddha's dispensation do not know how to choose their destination of rebirth. For example, Asitaṅga, the teacher of King Suddhodana, succeeded in developing all the eight attainments. He thought he would certainly be reborn in the plane of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, because that was his highest attainment. He thought that only the highest attainment would produce its result, and he did not know that he could choose any plane based on his jhānas. That was why he wept when he saw the

Price Siddhattha, our bodhisatta. He thought he would not be able to see our bodhisatta become a Buddha.

(wisdom: The Noble Eightfold Path)

Question 63: The Noble Eightfold Path is a preliminary path, not a mixed path? What is a preliminary path? Why the Noble Eightfold Path is not a mixed path? Does it not include the supramundane states?

Answer 63: The preliminary path is the path before the arising of the noble path, including all the insight knowledges which arise before the path knowledge. The Noble Eightfold Path does consist of both mundane and supramundane paths, but I think you misunderstood what I said, because what I said was ‘the four foundations of mindfulness are the preliminary path’, not ‘the Noble Eightfold Path is the preliminary path’.

When the Mahāsatipatthāna Sutta says that the four foundations of mindfulness are the single way, all other seven paths are also included implicitly, but the eight path factors here refer to mundane Noble Eightfold Path only. This is understandable, because the supramundane Noble Eightfold Path takes Nibbāna as object, not kāya, feeling, consciousness and various dhammas. Furthermore, every path consciousness arises only once, and of course cannot arise successively for seven days, or for up to seven years. But in the sutta the Buddha says that if a bhikkhu practises the four foundations of mindfulness diligently for seven days or for up to seven years, he will attain Arahantship or the non-returning path and fruition. From these two points we can conclude that the four foundations of mindfulness belong to the preliminary path only.

Question 64: What are the differences between the faculty of mindfulness, the enlightenment factor of mindfulness and right mindfulness? It is said that right mindfulness of the Noble Eightfold Path refers to the four foundations of mindfulness. Is it correct?

Answer 64: They are the same. They have different names just because the Buddha explains mindfulness from various angles.

There are mundane and supramundane Noble Eightfold Path; the four foundations of mindfulness belong to mundane right mindfulness.

Question 65: The faculty of wisdom can understand the paṭibhāga-nimitta, and the enlightenment factor of investigation of dhammas also can understand the paṭibhāga-nimitta. What is the difference between them?

Answer 65: Both the faculty of wisdom and the enlightenment factor of investigation of dhammas are the same; they are just right view, wisdom mental concomitant.

To prevent you from misunderstanding that they can take only the paṭibhāga-nimitta as object, I shall explain different kinds of right view for you. There are: the jhāna right view, Vipassanā right view, path right view, and fruition right view.

Generally the object of the jhāna right view is a paṭibhāga-nimitta which is a concept. Some jhāna right views, however, can take ultimate reality as object, for example, the right view of the base of boundless consciousness takes the jhāna consciousness of the base of boundless space as object, and the right view of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception takes the jhāna consciousness of the base of nothingness as object. However, the jhāna right view is quite inferior.

The Vipassanā right view consists of:

1. The right view discerning the Noble Truth of Suffering, ultimate mentality-materiality.
2. The right view discerning the Noble Truth of the Cause for Suffering, dependent-origination. It is also called the right view seeing one’s kamma as one’s own property (kammassakatā sammādiṭṭhi).
3. The mundane path right view which discerns all formations.

The path right view takes cessation as object. There are two kinds of cessation: perpetual cessation (accantanirodha) and vanishing cessation (khayanirodha). Perpetual cessation is Nibbāna, and the

right view which takes it as object is the supramundane path right view. Vanishing cessation is the passing-away of formations, that is, the passing-away of mentality-materiality and their causes. The right view which takes this cessation as object is mundane path right view.

The fruition right view is the wisdom mental concomitant of the fruition consciousness which always takes Nibbāna as object.

(wisdom: dependent-origination)

Question 66: In the dhamma talk of March 21st the Sayadaw said that when a meditator practising dependent-origination discerns the future, he has to discern that in which future life he will attain Arahantship, attain Parinibbāna, and all his mentality-materiality will cease then. Do all meditators who practise up to this stage can discern those things?

Answer 66: Yes. Because later when cultivating the Knowledge of Arising and Passing-Away (*Udayabbayaññāna*), every meditator has to discern two kinds of arising and passing-away of all formations, namely, the momentary arising and passing-away of formations (*khaṇato udayabbaya*) and the causal arising and passing-away of formations (*paccayato udayabbaya*).

As regards the causal arising and passing-away of formations (*paccayato udayabbaya*), I shall explain it with the example of materiality. You should first discern the causal arising of materiality by seeing it according to the fifth method of dependent-origination. You look back to the near death moments of your past life, to see the five past causes, which caused the arising in this life of materiality produced by kamma. You then see that:

1. The arising of ignorance causes the arising of materiality produced by kamma.
2. The arising of craving causes the arising of materiality produced by kamma.
3. The arising of clinging causes the arising of materiality produced by kamma.
4. The arising of volitional formations causes the arising of materiality produced by kamma.

5. The arising of kamma causes the arising of materiality produced by kamma.

You then need to see the causal arising of materiality produced by mind, materiality produced by temperature, and materiality produced by nutriment.

6. You discern that mind causes the arising of materiality produced by mind.
7. You discern that temperature causes the arising of materiality produced by temperature.
8. You discern that nutriment causes the arising of materiality produced by nutriment.

After you are able to discern the causal arising of materiality, you then see again and again their passing-away, and the cause of their passing-away. For example, in the case of materiality, you discern the causal cessation of materiality by seeing it according to the fifth method of dependent-origination. You look forward to the future life in which you become an Arahant, you see that when you attain Arahant Path and Fruition (*arahattamagga* and *arahattaphala*), all the defilements cease. You see that at the end of that life all formations cease: this is directly seeing your Parinibbāna when no new materiality or mentality arises. You see that:

1. The cessation of ignorance causes the cessation of materiality produced by kamma.
2. The cessation of craving causes the cessation of materiality produced by kamma.
3. The cessation of clinging causes the cessation of materiality produced by kamma.
4. The cessation of volitional formations causes the cessation of materiality produced by kamma.
5. The cessation of kamma causes the cessation of materiality produced by kamma.

You then need to see the causal passing-away of materiality

produced by mind, materiality produced by temperature, and materiality produced by nutriment. You see that:

6. The cessation of mind causes the cessation of materiality produced by mind.
7. The cessation of temperature causes the cessation of materiality produced by temperature.
8. The cessation of nutriment causes the cessation of materiality produced by nutriment.

Then you discern the causal arising and passing-away of materiality together.

If you do not see your last future life wherein you will destroy all your defilements and attain Arahantship, you will be unable to discern the causal arising and passing-away of formation, but only the causal arising of formations. That is why to discern your last future life is necessary.

Question 67: During Pa-Auk Sayadaw's first Dhamma talk, I heard him mention that during one of the attainment of knowledge one is able to see exactly the time one is going to attain Arahantship. Does it mean that when to attain Arahantship is predestined? If so, if one has already gained the knowledge of seeing 'the time one is going to attain Arahantship,' the amount of one's later effort and meritorious deeds is not going to help one's pāramīs mature faster and make one enlighten faster, isn't it?

Answer 67: The Yamaka, one of the seven books of Abhidhamma, states that the Buddha says that there are two types person of last existence (pacchimabhavika), that is, a person who has come to the last existence. One of them is certain, and the other is uncertain.

One who has certainly come to the last existence is one who will certainly attain Arahantship in that very life, for example, the Venerables Sāriputta, Mahāmoggallāna, Bakkula and Saṅkicca.

When the Venerable Bakkula as an infant was being bathed in the river on an auspicious day, he fell into the stream through the negligence of his nurse. A fish swallowed him and eventually came to

the bathing place at Benares. There it was caught by a fisherman and sold to a rich man's wife. The fish interested her, and thinking to cook it herself, she slit it open. When she did so, she saw the child like a golden image, in the fish's stomach. She, who was barren, was overjoyed, thinking 'At last I have got a son'. The Venerable Bakkula's safe survival in a fish's stomach in his last existence was due to the fact that he would definitely attain the Arahant Path Knowledge in that very life.

Regarding the Venerable Saṅkicca, his mother died while he was still in her womb. At the time of her cremation she was pierced by stakes and placed on a pyre. The infant received a wound on the corner of his eye from the point of a stake and made a sound. Then thinking that the child must be alive, they took down the body and opened its belly. They gave the child to the grandmother. Under her care he grew up. When he was seven he went forth as a novice and attained Arahantship together with the four types of analytical knowledge. The Venerable Saṅkicca could survive in the womb even though his mother was already dead. This was also due to the fact that he would definitely attain the Arahant Path Knowledge in that very life.

The course of another type of person of last existence is still changeable, for example, Mahādhanaṣeṭṭhiputta. Once the Buddha saw an old beggar couple and smiled. The Venerable Ānanda asked the Buddha what was the reason for his smile. The Buddha told him that if the couple practised the Dhamma in their first stage of life, the husband called Mahādhanaṣeṭṭhiputta would have attained Arahantship, and his wife the non-returning path and fruition. If they practised the Dhamma in their second stage of life, the husband would have attained the non-returning path and fruition and his wife the once-returning path and fruition. If they practised the Dhamma in the first part of their third stage of life, the husband would have attained the once-returning path and fruition and his wife the stream-entry path and fruition. But they had become beggars, and too old and weak to practise the Dhamma, so they missed the opportunity to practise the Dhamma and could not attain any path and fruition.

Another similar example is King Ajatasattu. He had the potential to attain the stream-entry path and fruition while listening to the

Sammaññaphala Sutta given by the Buddha, but he could not attain them because he did not meet the Buddha before he killed his father.

According to the Venerable Ledi Sayadaw's explanation, King Ajatasattu, Mahādhanaṣeṭṭhiputta and his wife had the potential to enlighten because they had enough wisdom seeds. But owing to not having enough seeds of good conduct, they could not meet the Buddha at the right time and suffered the great loss of the golden opportunity to escape from the round of rebirths.

Therefore, to some meditators they will certainly attain Arahantship in one of his future life, but to other meditators the attainment is still uncertain. So, meditators must continue to discern their mentality-materiality in their future lives as impermanent, suffering and non-self to develop the Knowledge of Disenchantment towards them. The stronger is this knowledge, the quicker will the meditators attain Arahantship, even in this very life. For example, when some meditators were discerning dependent-origination they saw that they would have four or five future lives, but after practising vipassanā meditation for some time, they saw that they would have only one or two future lives. For this type of people, their future can still change according to conditions.

Question 68: Can the time of the future attainment of Arahantship still change? For example, can a meditator attain Arahantship earlier or later than that he discerned?

Answer 68: Unless he received a definite prophecy before, otherwise when will he attain Arahantship is still changeable. For example, during the Buddha's time there was a man named Mahādhāna. The Buddha said that if the man would renounce the world and practise the Dhamma in his first stage of life, he would have attained Arahantship; if the man would renounce the world and practise the Dhamma in his second stage of life, he would have attained the non-returning path and fruition; and if the man would renounce the world and practise the Dhamma in the beginning of his last stage of life, he would have attained the once-returning path and fruition. However, when the Buddha met him, he had become a poor beggar, was unable to practise the Dhamma, and was no longer able to attain

any path and fruition.

Question 69: What is the main reason if a person who wants to become an ordinary Arahant still does not, after discerning five, ten or more future lives, see his last future life?

Answer 69: One of the possible reasons is that he received a definite prophecy in a previous Buddha's dispensation. He might be given the prophecy that he will attain enlightenment after a time longer than that you mentioned. Another possible reason is that although he never received any prophecy, he made an aspiration to attain enlightenment in a future Buddha's dispensation. For example, there were two thousand ordinary Arahant bhikkhunis who attained Parinibbāna on the same day as Yasodharā. During Dīpaṅkara Buddha's time, they had made an aspiration to escape from the round of rebirths (*samsāra*) in the dispensation of Sakyamuni Buddha. Although it is not necessary to accumulate pāramīs for four incalculables and a hundred thousand aeons to become an ordinary Arahant, they remained in the round of rebirths, from the time of Dīpaṅkara Buddha up to the time of Sakyamuni Buddha, just because of their aspiration. They had not received a definite prophecy, but had made an aspiration only.

Question 70: Does a meditator, who knows through discernment that after how many lives he will attain Arahantship, need to discern the same number of past lives? For example, if he sees that he still has ten more future lives, does he need to discern ten past lives as well?

Answer 70: In the Paccaya Sutta of the Saṃyutta Nikāya, the Buddha says that we must discern the causes of past five aggregates; the *Sammohavinodanī*, the commentary to the *Dhammasangani*, also says that bhikkhus should discern that in past and future lives there are only causes and effects. Thus it is a must to discern the causes of past five aggregates, but how many past lives have to be discerned is not mentioned.

There are a few reasons why it is necessary to discern the causes of past five aggregates, for example, to remove the doubt regarding past lives, to remove the attachment towards past lives, and to discern

what the seeds of virtuous conduct (carana) and wisdom (vijjā) accumulated in past lives. Because of the latter, I always teach meditators to discern and find out in which past life they accumulated enough wisdom seeds for them to attain enlightenment in this life. How many lives they need to discern depends on individuals.

Question 71: The Sayadaw often mentions offering flowers to the Buddha image and wishing for a bhikkhu or bhikkhunī life. If one wishes to attain or realize Nibbāna, is that still ignorance and craving?

Answer 71: If one wishes to attain or realize Nibbāna, it is called sammāchanda, a wholesome desire. That is not ignorance or craving. But as long as you have not attained Arahantship, that wholesome desire can still produce its result. For example, you offer flowers to a Buddha image, wishing only to attain Nibbāna. That is a wholesome kamma and is not surrounded by ignorance, craving and clinging. However, that wholesome kamma has energy to produce a good result. If that wholesome kamma becomes mature at your near-death moment, its object (the Buddha image or flowers) or the kamma itself (offering flowers to Buddha image) or the sign of future destination will appear in your mind. Although when you are performing that wholesome kamma, there were no ignorance, craving and clinging, but the latent tendency of ignorance, craving and clinging are present. So at the death moment, when one of the three objects mentioned above appears, ignorance, craving and clinging will arise in your mind. How? It is because at that time an inclination towards a certain plane will appear, be it an inclination to a human life, a bhikkhu life, or a deva life, etc. Since you have not attained Arahantship, you cannot enter Nibbāna after death and must be reborn somewhere. Because of that reason, there must be an inclination occurring at the near death moment. At that time ignorance, craving and clinging are present. For example, you incline to a deva life at that time. Your wrong knowledge that there is a deva is ignorance. Your attachment towards a deva life is craving. Repeated craving is called clinging.

Question 72: What is the meaning of ‘because of the arising of

consciousness, mentality-materiality arises; because of the arising of mentality-materiality, consciousness arises,’ mentioned in the Mahānidāna Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya?

Answer 72: Regarding Dependent Origination, the Buddha taught ‘because of the arising of consciousness, mentality-materiality arises’ (viññāṇa paccaya nāmarūpaṃ) and ‘because of the arising of mentality-materiality, consciousness arises’ (nāmarūpa paccaya viññāṇaṃ). In the five aggregates method, it is mentioned ‘nāmarūpasamudayā viññāṇasamudayo.’ What does The Buddha mean by saying ‘because of the arising of consciousness, mentality and materiality arise’? Here, consciousness refers to mind (citta), mentality refers to mental concomitants (cetasika), and materiality refers to only mind-produced materiality (cittajarūpa). Because of the arising of consciousness, mental concomitants (mentality) arise. Because of the arising of consciousness, mind-produced materiality (materiality) arises. So because of the arising of consciousness, mentality (cetasika) and materiality (cittajarūpa) arise. If you can discern mind-produced materiality, you can understand this meaning clearly.

‘Nāmarūpasamudayā viññāṇasamudayo’ means because of the arising of mentality-materiality, consciousness arises. While you are discerning five aggregates by way of causal relationship, you must try to see the relationship between mental aggregates. The Buddha taught ‘phassasamudaya vedanāsamudayo, phassasamudaya saññāsamudayo, phassasamudaya saṅkhārāsamudayo, nāmarūpasamudaya viññāṇasamudayo.’ – ‘Because of the arising of contact, feeling arises; because of the arising of contact, perception arises; because of the arising of contact, formations arise.’ For consciousness, the Buddha taught that ‘because of the arising of mentality-materiality, consciousness arises.’ Here, mentality refers to mental concomitants. Materiality refers to bases. Consciousness of beings in the five aggregates world cannot arise without a base. Without mental concomitants, consciousness cannot arise either. So mental concomitants are also a proximate cause for consciousness to arise. Consciousness and mental concomitants depend on each other for arising. The four mental aggregates depend on one another. If one

mental aggregate is the cause, the other three are the effect. If two mental aggregates are the cause, the remaining two are the effect. If three mental aggregates are the cause, the remaining one is the effect.

Question 73: What is the relationship between the four types of food, kabaliṅkārahāra, phassāhāra, cetanāhāra and viññāṇāhāra, and nāma-rūpa? How to discern these four āhāra (food) while discerning dependent origination?

Answer 73: I shall explain with examples. ‘Sabbe sattā āhāra-ṭhitikā.’ – ‘All beings depend on food.’ Here ‘āhāra’ means ‘cause’, not ‘food’. You may translate it as food, but that food means cause. Kabaliṅkārahāra means four types of materiality, i.e. kamma-produced materiality (kammaja-rūpa), mind-produced materiality (cittaja-rūpa), temperature-produced materiality (utuja-rūpa), and nutriment-produced materiality (āhāraja-rūpa). In each of them, there is nutritive essence (ojā). Here, by kabaliṅkārahāra, the Buddha emphasises that nutritive essence. The nutritive essence of the four types of materiality is the main cause for the beings in the five aggregates world. However, nutritive essence cannot arise alone, it must arise together with other types of concomitant materiality. Another point is that there are six bases in kammaja-rūpa, one of the four types of materiality. For beings in the five aggregates world, mentality must depend on bases to arise.

Here, ‘cetanā’ refers to formations (saṅkhāra), ‘viññāṇa’ refers to only kamma-viññāṇa, and ‘phassa’ is the contact that arises together with cetanā and viññāṇa. So phassa, cetanā, and viññāṇa, here, mean saṅkhāra and kamma.

For example, you discern previous causes, such as offering flowers to a Buddha image. While you were offering, mental formations arose according to thought processes. If you analyse these thought processes, you will see thirty-four mental formations in each impulsion moment when that offering was performed with a happy and clear mind. Among these thirty-four, there is contact, phassa. That contact is called phassāhāra, because it connected the object to the mental formations and consciousness. If your kammic force took flowers as an object, then phassa connected the flowers with your

mental formations and consciousness. Without phassa you would not see the flowers, so phassa was one cause.

Cetanā, volition, is very important. It is called saṅkhāra or kamma. Depending on the energy of that cetana, a result could appear. A strong and powerful cetanā would produce a strong and powerful result. A weak cetanā would produce a weak result. So cetanā is also a kind of āhāra, cause. However, cetanā could not arise without viññāṇa. So that viññāṇa is called kammaviññāṇa. Altogether there were thirty-four mental formations. As soon as these mental formations arose, they passed away. But there still existed kammic force, which could produce its result. Saṅkhāra and kamma arose dependent on a base. The base was one cause.

There were still supporting causes, i.e. ignorance, craving and clinging, which arose in another thought process. That is why the Buddha taught in the Āhāra Sutta thus: ‘catāro āhāra kiṅ nidānaṃ kiṅ samudayaṃ kiṅ pabhāvaṃ...?’ – ‘Because of which dhamma, the four āhāra (food; cause) arise?’ ‘taṇhā nidānaṃ, taṇhā samudayaṃ, taṇhā pabhāvaṃ...’ – ‘because of the arising of craving, four āhāras arise.’ Repeated craving is called clinging. When there is craving and clinging, there must also be ignorance. So, because of the arising of ignorance, craving and clinging, four āhāras arise. You must try to discern this causal relationship. If you can discern this, then please try to discern the five aggregates in time of rebirth linking moment of this life. You should discern these five aggregates and kammic force in your previous life alternately to make sure that you see the kammic force produced those five aggregates. If you thought there was a bhikkhu or a bhikkhunī, your wrong knowledge was ignorance. Attachment to the bhikkhu’s or bhikkhunī’s aggregates was craving. Repeated craving to that bhikkhu’s or bhikkhunī’s life was clinging. Because of ignorance, craving and clinging, formations and kamma arose. Because of the arising of kammic force, five aggregates in time of rebirth arose. You should try to see the relationship between causes and effects in this way again and again. At that time, you will understand that four āhāras can produce five aggregates in time of rebirth.

There is another way. You can also discern present four āhāras. For example, if you wish to become a bhikkhu or bhikkhunī in the future,

you may accumulate some wholesome deeds. These wholesome deeds include phassāhāra, cetanāhāra and viññāṇāhāra, that is, phassa cause, cetana cause and viññāṇa cause. They arise depending on bases, which is kabalīnkārāhāra. So there are altogether four causes. Why do these four causes arise? Because of the arising of craving, four causes arise. Craving is a cause; four causes are an effect. Because of the arising of feeling, craving arises. Feeling is a cause; craving is an effect. Because of the arising of contact, feeling arises. Contact is a cause; feeling is an effect. Because of the arising of six bases, contact arises. Six bases are a cause; contact is an effect. Because of the arising of materiality and mentality, six bases arise. Materiality and mentality is a cause; six bases are an effect. Because of the arising of consciousness, materiality and mentality arises. Consciousness is a cause; materiality and mentality is an effect. Because of the arising of formations, consciousness arises. Formations are a cause; consciousness is an effect. Because of the arising of ignorance, volitional formations arise. Ignorance is a cause; volitional formations are an effect. You should try to discern cause and effect in this way, the way of discerning backwards, paṭiloma paṭiccasamuppāda method.

(wisdom: the attainment of Nibbana)

Question 74: The Susīma Sutta mentions ‘we know that birth and death have ceased, the holy life has been established...’ and ‘the dhammaṭṭhitiñāṇa is attained first; the knowledge of Nibbāna is attained later’. Do the two statements have the same meaning as that mentioned by the Sayadaw on March 21st? For example, does ‘a meditator knows through discernment that in which future life he will attain Arahantship’ have the same meaning as ‘we know that (in which future life) birth and death will have ceased, the dhammaṭṭhitiñāṇa will have been attained first, and the knowledge of Nibbāna will be attained later’?

Answer 74: I think you misunderstood both the Susīma Sutta and what I said. The sentence ‘I know birth is destroyed, holy life has been established, what to be done has been done, there is no more to be done’ is the words used by Arahants to make known their

attainment of Arahantship, how can a person who practises up to only dependent-origination make such a claim?

Susīma had heard that many arahants came to the Buddha, and reported that they had attained Arahantship. So Susīma asked them whether they had the eight attainments and five psychic powers. They answered ‘No’. ‘If you do not have the eight attainments and five psychic powers, how did you attain Arahantship?’ Then they answered ‘Paññāvimuttā kho mayaṃ āvuso Susīma’: ‘Oh, friend Susīma, we attained liberation through wisdom.’ He did not understand so he asked the Buddha the same question. The Buddha said, ‘Pubbe kho Susīma dhammaṭṭhitiñāṇaṃ pacchā nibbāne ñāṇaṃ.’: ‘The Knowledge Standing on Phenomena comes first, the Path Knowledge taking Nibbāna as object comes next.’

What does this mean? The Path Knowledge is not the result of the eight attainments and five psychic powers, it is the result of insight-knowledges. So the Path Knowledge can occur only after insight-knowledges have occurred; not after only the eight attainments and five psychic powers. In this Susīma Sutta, all insight-knowledges are referred to as the Knowledge Standing on Phenomena. Here, phenomena are formations (*saṅkhāra-dhamma*), ‘standing on phenomena’ means ‘taking formations as object’, and knowledge refers to insight knowledge. Thus the Knowledge Standing on Phenomena is the insight-knowledge of the impermanent, suffering and non-self nature of all formations, which are mentality, materiality, and their causes.

Question 75: According to what the Sayadaw, to practise Vipassanā we must first develop strong and powerful concentration, but the Arahants mentioned in the Susīma Sutta had no jhānas. Could the Sayadaw please explain what is liberation through wisdom?

Answer 75: ‘Liberation through wisdom’ is the liberation attained through practising the pure-insight vehicle, without any attainment of jhāna. This, however, does not mean that it is possible to be attained without having strong and powerful concentration as foundation. Those who want to attain it must practise four elements meditation, discerning the characteristics of the four elements in the body. The

characteristics are: hardness, roughness, heaviness, softness, smoothness, lightness, flowing, cohesion, heat, coldness, supporting, and pushing. They must discern them until they see their body becomes transparent and emitting brilliant light. When they continue to discern the four elements in the transparent body or to see spaces in it, they will see very many small particles arising and passing-away swiftly. They have then attained strong and powerful momentary concentration which has equal strength with access concentration. Based on strong and powerful momentary concentration, they must further analyse all types of small particle in six doors and the forty-two parts of the body, to discern all the ultimate materiality in each type of small particle. Then they must further discern ultimate mentality according to thought processes. Having discerned ultimate mentality-materiality internally and externally, they must discern causes of mentality-materiality. Then they comprehend both internal and external mentality-materiality and their causes as impermanent, suffering and non-self, until they attain Arahantship.

Question 76: Do most of the meditators who have attained jhānas and have practised Vipassanā up to the Knowledge of Equanimity Towards Formations attain Nibbāna in this life? Are most of the noble ones reborn in the fine-material realm?

Answer 76: Yes, most of them can attain Nibbāna in this life. If they fail to attain it, most of them will attain it in the next life.

As regards do most noble persons take rebirth in the fine-material realm, it depends on how many noble paths and fruitions they have attained, have they attained any jhāna, and where they intend to be reborn. Since all Arahants will not have any more rebirth, it is impossible for them to be reborn in the fine-material realm. All non-returners will be reborn in that realm; most of them will be reborn in the pure abodes, but they can also choose according to their desire to be reborn in a lower plane in that realm, for example, Sahampati Brahmā is a non-returner who was reborn in the first jhāna plane. As for once-returners and stream-enterers, if they have attained one or more jhānas, and can maintain one of those jhānas up

to their near death moment, they will be reborn in the fine-material plane corresponding to the jhāna. As for those once-returners and stream-enterers who never attain any jhāna, they can only be reborn in the sensual realm as a deva or a human being.

Question 77: In Venerable Pa-Auk Sayadaw's book *Knowing and Seeing*, it is stated that there are three entrances to Nibbāna. In Venerable's talk on 13/12/2000, the Sayadaw says that contemplating the repulsiveness of the thirty-two parts of the body can lead to Nibbāna. Can a meditator who successfully contemplated non-self as well as arising and passing away of phenomena, without contemplating repulsiveness of body, attain Nibbāna? If so, can contemplating colour kasiṇa, which is one of the entrances, lead to Nibbāna?

Answer 77: Yes, he can. The three entrances to Nibbāna refer to only samatha meditation based on the bodily parts. You can attain the first jhāna by concentrating on the repulsiveness of the thirty-two parts of the body, attain the fourth colour kasiṇa jhāna by concentrating on the colour of any of them, or attain access concentration by concentrating on the four elements in them. Those jhānas and access concentration produce brilliant light of wisdom. With the assistance of the light you can practise vipassanā, discerning ultimate mentality-materiality, their causes, and the impermanent, suffering and non-self natures of mentality-materiality and their causes to attain Nibbāna. You may practise different types of samatha meditation, but vipassanā is always the same.

Question 78: Only through meditation can one attain Nibbāna and escape from the round of rebirths, isn't it?

Answer 78: There are four types of person, ughāṭitaññū, vipaṇcittaññū, neyya and padaparama. An ughāṭitaññū person can attain Nibbāna through mere listening to a short stanza. The Venerables Sāriputta and Mahāmoggallāna were this kind of people. A vipaṇcittaññū person can attain Nibbāna through mere listening to a discourse. For example, the Venerable Kondañña became a

stream-enterer through listening to the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta. Now these two types of person are no longer exist. A neyya person is one who must practise meditation systematically in order to attain Nibbāna. Most of the meditators are of this type. A padaparama is one who cannot attain any jhāna, path and fruition no matter how hard one practises. Even if you are this kind of person you should practise hard to accumulate enough pāramīs for you to attain Nibbāna in your future life.

Question 79: What defilements must a meditator eradicate to attain the stream-entry fruition? Does he need a teacher to confirm for him or does he know by himself when he really attains the stream-entry fruition?

Answer 79: According to some suttas, he must eradicate personality view (sakkāyadiṭṭhi), doubt (vicikicchā) and wrong belief in rites and rituals (silabbataparamasa). According to some suttas, he must eradicate these three defilements and another two defilements, jealousy (issa) and stinginess (macchariya). If he is skilled in scriptures, he may know that he is a noble person. But if he is not skilled in scriptures, he may not know that he is a noble person. For example, Mahānāma, who was a relation of the Buddha, did not know which defilements he had abandoned.

Question 80: The 'I' is a concept; a wish is a concept; jhānas, devas, brahmas, woeful states, and all other things in the mundane and supramundane planes are concepts. In the round of rebirths, there are only concepts going after concepts. Is Nibbāna also a concept? If it is, why it is? Could the Sayadaw please explain in detail? If Nibbāna is not a concept, how does a self, a concept, attain a non-concept? How does a conceptual self attain a non-concept at Parinibbāna? Speaking in the language of concept, could it be said that all Buddhas and Arahants would be meeting each other in Nibbāna, knowing their previous links in the round of rebirths? What would be their activities there?

Answer 80: You must differentiate between concepts and ultimate

realities. Human beings, devas and brahmas are concepts, because in the ultimate sense they are only ultimate mentality-materiality, which are ultimate realities.

There are four types of ultimate realities, namely, materiality, consciousness, mental concomitant and Nibbāna. Materiality, consciousness, mental concomitant are impermanent ultimate realities, whereas Nibbāna is permanent ultimate reality. Wishes and jhānas consist of consciousness and mental concomitants; they are not concepts. The mundane dhammas include ultimate realities and concepts, but all the nine supramundane dhammas, the four paths, four fruitions and Nibbāna are only ultimate realities. The four paths and four fruitions consist of consciousness and mental concomitants. It is they that take Nibbāna as object, not the concept of human being.

At Parinibbāna, all Buddhas and Arahants' five aggregates cease completely, thus it is impossible for them to meet each other in Nibbāna.

Question 81: In some discourses of the Buddha, a kind of consciousness is said to remain after Parinibbāna. What kind of consciousness is it?

Answer 81: This is not mentioned in Theravāda Pāḷi Texts and commentaries, but it is stated clearly that after Parinibbāna all the five aggregates, including all kinds of consciousness, cease completely.

Question 82: It is said that there is Nibbāna which is permanent, self and satisfactory. Is it true?

Answer 82: No. It is true that Nibbāna is permanent and has the bliss of peace, but it is non-self.

In the Dhammapada the Buddha says: 'Sabbe saṅkhārā anicca; sabbe saṅkhārā dukkha; sabbe dhamma anatta.' – 'All formations are impermanent; all formations are suffering; all dhammas are non-self.' Formations consist of materiality, consciousness and mental concomitants, whereas dhammas further include Nibbāna and

concepts. You should specially note that the Buddha says that all dhammas are non-self, but not only all formations are non-self. So all formations are impermanent, suffering and non-self, whereas Nibbāna is permanent, blissful and non-self.

Question 83: According to the Brahmajāla Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya, after acquiring some meditation experience, a meditator may fall into one of the sixty-two wrong views. If a meditator practises samatha and vipassanā systematically until he has attained all the sixteen insight knowledges, can he avoid falling into the sixty-two wrong views? Or he still needs a teacher's instruction so as to avoid falling into them?

Answer 83: If he really attained all the sixteen insight knowledges, he will no longer have any wrong views.

Question 84: Every religion has its own goal. For example, the goal of Hinduism is to merge oneself with the Mahābrahma, and the goal of Christianity is to reach the eternal heaven. Both of them are eternal view. The goal of Buddhism is to attain Nibbāna. Is it an eternal view, an annihilation view, or a neither-eternal-nor-annihilation view? If a person does not understand the meaning of Nibbāna, why he still has it as his goal?

Answer 84: Buddhism does not teach the eternal view and the annihilation view, but right view or the middle path. Both the eternal view and the annihilation view assert that there is a self. This is not accepted in Buddhism. The Buddha always teaches that the thirty-one planes of existence are only formations, which are impermanent, suffering and non-self. The Buddha teaches that if there is cause there is effect, and if there is not cause there is no effect.

You should differentiate between Nibbana, the complete cessation of defilements (Kilesa Parinibbāna) and the complete cessation of aggregates (Khandha Parinibbāna). The four path knowledges and the four fruition knowledges take Nibbāna, which is also called unformed Nibbāna (Asañkhata Nibbāna), as object. When a person attains the Arahant Path Knowledge, which takes unformed Nibbāna

as object, all his defilements cease completely. The complete cessation of defilements is also called the complete cessation with remainder (Saupadisesa Nibbāna) because although the Arahant has no defilements, he still has the five aggregates. Due to the complete cessation of defilements, when the Arahant attains Parinibbāna, all the five aggregates cease completely. The complete cessation of aggregates is also called the complete cessation without remainder (Anupadisesa Nibbāna). Both the complete cessation of defilements and the complete cessation of aggregates are the results, and the Arahant Path together with its object, unformed Nibbāna, are the causes. The complete cessation of aggregates happens according to the natural law of cause and effect. This is totally different from annihilation view which asserts that there is complete cessation without the causes, the Arahant Path and unformed Nibbāna.

Question 85: Can a person attain the path and fruition directly from the first jhāna without practising vipassanā?

Answer 85: No, he cannot.

Question 86: Why the beings in the four immaterial realms cannot attain the stream-entry path?

Answer 86: A Buddha's disciple must fulfil two factors, listening to the Dhamma from other (paratoghosa) and wise attention (yonisomanasikāra), to attain the stream-entry path. Wise attention is to see formations as impermanent, suffering, non-self and impure. As regards the factor of listening to the Dhamma from other, even the Venerable Sāriputta, who had very sharp wisdom, could not attain the stream-entry path with his intuitive knowledge, but only after listening a short stanza from the Venerable Assaji. The beings in the four immaterial realms have no ears to listen to the Dhamma from other, so it is impossible for them to attain the stream-entry path.

Question 87: The Sayadaw teaches meditators to discern the twelve characteristics of the four elements in the whole body to develop access concentration, and then proceed to vipassanā meditation

directly to cultivate the last five of the seven purifications. Only when those purifications are fulfilled can they attain Nibbāna. Nowadays there is also a kind of practice said to be originated from the Buddha's teaching. It is to begin with contemplation of feeling. The meditators also directly discern the feeling of the whole body as impermanent. It gives great emphasis on discerning the present, and is not necessary to discern ultimate mentality-materiality. Can a meditator attain jhāna or Nibbāna through practising this method? Is this method in accordance with that stated in the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta?

Answer 87: Now you are listening to the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta, so you yourself should decide whether that practice is in accordance with that stated in the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta.

In the Aparijānana Sutta of Sabbavagga of Saḷāyatana Saṃyutta, the Buddha says: 'Sabbam bhikkhave anabhijānam aparijānam avirājayaṃ appajahaṃ abhabbo dukkhakkhayāya ... (P)... Sabbañca kho bhikkhave abhijānam parijānam virājayaṃ pajahaṃ bhabbo dukkhakkhayāya.' – 'Bhikkhus, without fully knowing, without comprehending, without detaching from, without abandoning the All, one is unable to end suffering ... Bhikkhus, by fully knowing, by comprehending, by detaching from, by abandoning the All, one is able to end suffering.'

The commentary to this sutta explains further that this refers to the three types of full understanding (pariññā). It says: 'Iti imasmim sutte tissopi pariññā kathitā honti. 'Abhijānan'ti hi vacanena nātāpariññā kathitā, 'parijānan'ti vacanena, tīraṇāpariññā, 'virājayaṃ pajahaṃ'ti dvīhi pahānapariññāti.' – 'What is said in this sutta is the three types of full understanding. "Fully understanding" refers to full understanding as the known (nāta pariññā), "comprehending" refers to full understanding as investigating (tīraṇa pariññā), and the last two "detaching from and abandoning" refer to full understanding as abandoning (pahāna pariññā).

Regarding the word 'All', the Mahāṭīkā says: 'Tañhi anāvesato pariññeyyaṃ ekamsato virājitaṃ.' – 'It is necessary to first discern thoroughly and without exception all the five clinging aggregates which are the objects of vipassanā meditation.' What are

the five clinging aggregates? They are the eleven types of five clinging aggregates, the past, present, future, internal, external, gross, subtle, inferior, superior, far and near. So, in order to remove desire and craving for mentality-materiality and to be free from suffering, one must comprehend the three characteristics of all types of materiality and mentality which are the objects of vipassanā meditation.

In the Mahānidāna Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya, the Buddha says: 'Gambhīro cāyaṃ Ānanda paṭiccasamuppādo gambhīravabhāso ca. Etassacānanda dhammassa ananubodhā appaṭivedhā evamayam pajā tantākulakajātā gulāgaṇṭhikajāta muñjapabbajabhūta apāyaṃ duggati, vinipātam saṃsāram nātivattati.' – 'Ānanda, this dependent-origination is deep and appears deep. Due to not realizing dependent-origination with anubodhañāṇa and paṭivedhañāṇa, and not attaining the path and fruition knowledges, beings are entangled in the round of rebirths like a knotted ball of thread, like weaverbird's nest, like a tangled grass foot-mat where the beginning and the end of the grass cannot be found; and they cannot escape from the woeful states.'

Here, anubodhañāṇa and paṭivedhañāṇa refer to the three types of full understanding. Referring to the passage from this sutta, the commentator taught as follows: 'Ñāṇāsinā samādhipavarasilāyam sunisitena bhavacakkamapadāletvā, asanivicakkamiva niccanimmathanam. Saṃsārabhaya-matīto, na koci supinantarepyatthi.' – 'There is no one who can, even in a dream, escape from the round of rebirths without being able to sever the wheel of existence, which is always oppressing beings like thunderbolt, with the sword of knowledge which is well sharpened on the noble whetstone of concentration.'

According to the texts a meditator must first be able to discern all types of materiality and mentality which make up the five aggregates of clinging individually. That is: The knowledge that discerns all types of materiality individually is called the Knowledge of Analysing Materiality. The knowledge that discerns all types of mentality individually is called the Knowledge of Analysing Mentality. The knowledge that discerns materiality and mentality as two separate groups is called the Knowledge of Analysing

Mentality-Materiality. At this stage, the knowledge which sees clearly that there is no person, being or soul, but only mentality-materiality is called the Knowledge of Delimiting Mentality-Materiality.

A person who endeavours to discern all types of materiality and mentality may leave out those connected with jhāna if he has not attained jhāna. If, however, he is able to attain jhāna he should discern and meditate with insight knowledge on the materiality and mentality associated with whichever jhānas he has attained.

Second, the causes of those materiality and mentality must be known correctly as they really are. This is the Knowledge of Discerning Cause and Condition.

Because with these two knowledges, the Knowledge of Analysing Mentality-Materiality and the Knowledge of Discerning Cause and Condition, he knows clearly, distinctly and properly the dhammas that are the objects of insight knowledge, these two are also called full understanding as the known.

Third, the impermanent, suffering and non-self natures of all materiality, mentality, and their causes must be clearly seen. During the stages of insight from the Knowledge of Comprehension onwards, which constitute vipassanā, the materiality, mentality, and their causes are comprehended by seeing the three characteristics of each of them.

Of these insight knowledges, the two of the Knowledge of Comprehension and Knowledge of Arising and Passing-Away, whose functions are to investigate and discern the impermanent, suffering and non-self characteristics of all materiality, mentality, and their causes, are called full understanding as investigating.

From the Knowledge of Dissolution up through the remaining insight knowledges, only the passing away of all materiality, mentality, and their causes is known and perceived as impermanent, suffering and non-self. As at that time the defilements that should be abandoned are temporarily absent, these insight knowledges are called full understanding as abandoning.

Only after discerning all types of materiality and mentality in this way can a meditator attain the noble path.

I should like to explain in brief regarding discerning ‘the present